

# **The Warman Story**

**The Refinery That Never Was**

**G.A. McConnell**



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee  
Canada**





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Introduction by  
Leo Driedger

Mennonite Central Committee Canada  
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## Introduction

Eldorado's invasion of the Warman community is a dramatic story of "the little guy against the corporation." Usually industry has its way in rural areas, riding roughshod over the wishes of small communities, but this time it did not. David did not slay the giant, but he did chase him away. Democracy prevailed over capitalism.

While the Warman story focuses on northern rural Saskatchewan, this local story has a much larger "everyone" theme with much "universal" appeal. In reading this local drama we can identify with minority pioneers who worked hard to establish their solid ethnic communities. Industry should not invade the sacred domain of minorities at will, simply to make a buck. Foreign intrusions are usually unwelcome, but the invasion of a nuclear refinery into an historically pacifist farming community, seems unnatural and unjust when the community does not want it. Let us provide a larger social context in this introduction, so we can better understand why the "little guy" fought and won near Warman.

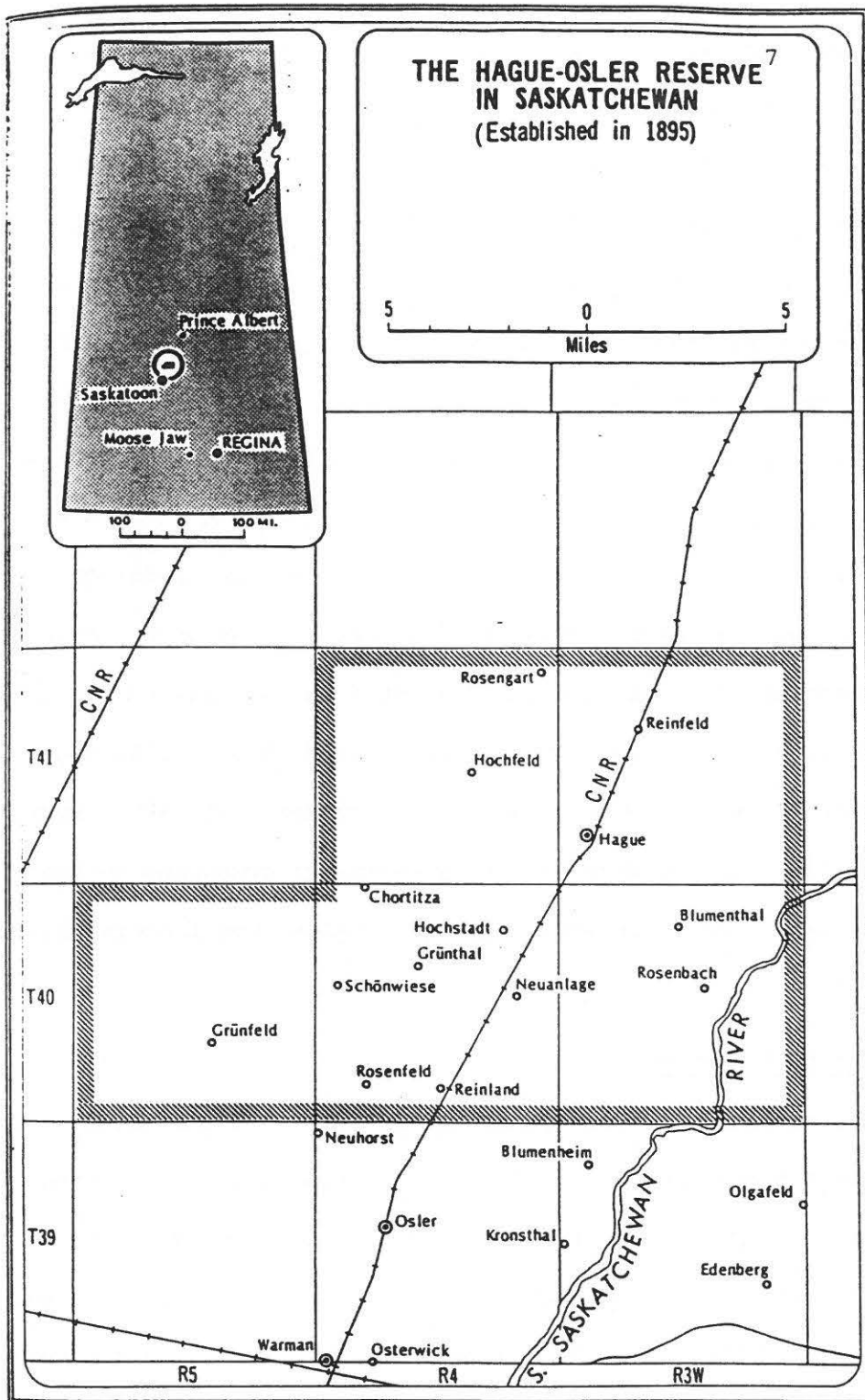
The Canadian prairies were opened to European settlers by land survey about a hundred years ago. North and East European agricultural pioneers flooded the area so that it is the most ethnically heterogeneous region in Canada. In the 1930s Charles Dawson wrote several books documenting the French Canadian, German Catholic, Mormon, Doukobor and Mennonite communities which dotted the prairies.<sup>1</sup> These agriculturalists entered only after treaties had been made with the Indians, shunted onto reserves, often unwillingly. Alan Anderson has documented some of the cultural diversity of these

communities surrounding the Saskatoon area, showing the extent to which French, German, Polish and Ukrainian Catholics, Ukrainian Orthodox, Doukobors, and Scandinavian, Mennonite and Hutterite Protestants established rural ethnic enclaves.<sup>2</sup> With such a diversity of minorities, we could expect potential conflict.

Two similar battles were fought north of Warman, where minorities did not prevail. In 1885 the Riel Rebellion took place at Batoche, about 25 miles north of Warman. The French Metis and some native Indians sought to negotiate with the federal government for political representation, minority rights, and other demands which today seem quite reasonable. The federal government responded by recruiting an army in the east, which crushed the uprising in 1885.<sup>3</sup> The federal government refused to negotiate, and used a sledge hammer to kill a butterfly. Louis Riel was hanged in Regina. Since then both the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments have recognized that they over-reacted, neglected the just demands of Riel, and have placed monuments on their legislative grounds. A few years later (1891) Mennonites began to settle around Rosthern, and in 1895 large numbers of Old Colony Mennonites settled in the Hague-Osler-Warman area.<sup>4</sup>

A second major upheaval involved conservative Old Colony Mennonites in the area, when the German schools which they thought had been guaranteed, were judged inadequate by the Saskatchewan government, and the Mennonites were forced to send their children to public schools.<sup>5</sup> Public hearings were held by provincial officials as early as December 28 and 29, 1908.<sup>6</sup> By 1920 the conflict between the government and the Mennonites had escalated to the point where duplicate public school buildings were built near most Mennonite villages. Mennonites refused to send their children, they were heavily fined and some were jailed. As a result in the early 1920s thousands of





Mennonites sold their farms and emigrated to Mexico. At first the government thought they were bluffing, but they regretted later that they had worked so highhandedly. They had miscalculated the intensity and salience of Mennonite beliefs and convictions. Most of the Mennonite villages were torn apart by evacuation, and to this day they have not been the same. A community was disrupted, and some villages were destroyed. A very conservative group which conceived of itself as "the quiet in the land", was forced to resort first to civil disobedience, and then to flight. Some were jailed for their non-violent resistance. Again a hammer had been used to kill a butterfly.

A third major tragedy was about to happen when Eldorado Nuclear planned to build a hexafluoride refinery near Warman on the edge of a strong rural Mennonite community which had existed there since 1895. While armed rebellion or a mass evacuation was not planned this time to fight governmental encroachments, new more sophisticated means of battle emerged. Concerned citizens who were against a refinery, organized to keep Eldorado out. Why were they successful? Let us examine some factors which entered the equation.

#### The Economic Structure

The original Old Colony Mennonite villages established in 1895 were tightly-knit socio-economic units designed to serve all the needs of their adherents.<sup>8</sup> Before the coming of the Number 11 highway, these villages were also fairly isolated, and studies show that in 1955 most residents were engaged in farming, most villages had a store, their products were sold in the small hamlets of Osler, Hague and Warman, and generally their focus was on the traditional rural community. The more liberal Mennonites and other

farmers lived in the open country on single-family farms with the hamlets of Hague, Osler and Warman as their supply centers. Saskatoon was frequented from time to time to supplement their needs.

The coming of Highway 11 through the area changed the community enormously. By 1977 the economic structure in the villages had changed completely.<sup>9</sup> Most of the villagers were in non-farm occupations, and large numbers worked in the city. Of forty residents in 1977 in Neuhorst, two were farmers; in Neuanlage, six of forty were farmers. Both of these villages had become halfway houses for commuting Mennonites who had jobs in Saskatoon or the surrounding towns. Whereas women in 1955 worked only in the home, by 1977 some were beginning to take jobs elsewhere.

Hamlets and towns like Warman and Osler also emerged from sleepy rural places to comfortable rural halfway havens for commuting workers. Perhaps the most interesting development was Martensville, halfway house to urbanization.<sup>10</sup> The village began in 1953 when David Martens sold the first twenty-acre lots, and since then a thriving town had emerged, first the home of Mennonites mostly, and more recently of many others as well. All three of these towns were comfortable rural places where commuters could live in a rural setting away from the industrial setting. A single-family-village-town network had been created to afford the best of both worlds, the country and the city.

As yet industry had not come to the community in great numbers. Residents were certainly open to change as evidenced in the occupational and community changes which have already taken place. Residents were generally selective in their embrace of new industry because they wished to control their community advantages, generally typical of rural communities.<sup>11</sup>

Industries which promoted a natural extension of their activity were welcome. Grain elevators had always been part of wheat farming. In southern Manitoba factories which process beets, seeds, corn and row-crop were successful. Fruit-processing plants were successful in southern Ontario. They had been open to change in continuity with their values and needs.

The proposed Eldorado Nuclear refinery however, was seen as an attempt to parachute an alien operation into their community. The company managed in the east would run it; the yellowcake to be processed would be hauled in from the north; the land considered sacred for food production needed protection from damage; foreign trucks, trains and vehicles would trespass their territory; expertise would be needed which they did not have; many workers would be shipped in; the air, the water, the soil might be accidentally destroyed. If all these ingredients were sent in, and if so little of it was a natural outgrowth of their community, why should it be in their community at all, they asked? Much of Canada is wasteland, unfit for human population, where a refinery could easily be located. It did not fit into the community network. It was foreign. Most communities resent parachuted political candidates - parachuted industries were resented even more.

The Eldorado Nuclear literature indicates that they were relatively unaware of the social odds they faced, and they seemed to think that an economic proposal sufficiently lucrative and tempting might persuade the residents to set aside their values, and embrace a "stranger" industry. Eldorado Nuclear promised that 200 jobs would be created for local workers for two years; a few jobs for a very short time. Fewer jobs would be available to run the plant; and it was not clear how many of these would go to

outsiders. Corman Park Rural Municipality was promised about \$300,000 annually; a tax saving the equivalent of little more than a twenty-dollar bill in each local farmer's pocket. Saskatoon businesses would benefit from contracts and supplies; very little would be purchased in the local area. The province of Saskatchewan and Canada would benefit by increased income and a favorable balance of payments; these could be collected just as well if the plant was built anywhere else in the province. The economic benefit to the local community would be practically zero. The economic carrot had shrivelled to a thread. The promise of bread looked like a stone - it could turn into a millstone for generations to come. Why court uncertainty and potential danger?

#### Mennonite Culture

Mennonites have always tended to live in ethnic enclaves and culture is an important factor in maintaining boundaries as it is to many of their ethnic neighbors who also live in their ethnic communities. Mennonites favor identification with their culture, they have their language preferences, and they participate in the ethnic customs of their group.<sup>12</sup> Let us compare some of these family and cultural affinities of nine of the ethnic groups in the larger area surrounding Warman.

Three-fourths (75.4 percent) of the Mennonites, favored preservation of their identity; most other ethnic groups also favored identity preservation, so we see this concern is not unique to Mennonites alone.

Almost all Mennonites in the Warman area (97 percent), could speak Low German, their mother tongue, and two-thirds (69 percent) still used it often. In depth studies in 1955 and 1977 showed that Mennonites in general could and often did speak Low German at home, in business and at work.<sup>14</sup>

Table 1. Attitudes and Behavior of Nine Ethno-Religious Groups in the Warman Area Toward Ingroup Preservation.<sup>13</sup>

Group	Number Sampled	Favor Identity Preservation %	Ability to Speak Mother Tongue %	Extent of Ingroup Marriage %	Attend Church Regularly %	Prepare Traditional Foods Frequently %
Hutterite	(6)	100	100	100	100	100
Polish Catholic	(15)	92	100	69	53	100
Ukrainian Catholic	(154)	82	99	88	82	92
Ukrainian Orthodox	(83)	80	100	89	70	87
<u>Mennonite</u>	(244)	75	97	98	86	51
French	(202)	70	99	91	91	4
Scandinavian	(86)	74	90	96	87	69
Doukhobor	(20)	85	95	60	55	100
German Catholic	(190)	33	93	90	94	13
Total Sample	(1000)					
Average Percent		68	97	92	86	47

Customs were enriched by adopting foods of other groups in the surrounding environment, many prepared and ate traditional ingroup foods. Innovations in customs and culture usually take place first, but even here we see that many still preferred a traditional lifestyle. They were reluctant to accept foreign changes unrelated to their way of life. Change is often accepted when it is in continuity with their community structure and social networks.

### Family Cohesiveness

Families in the Warman area were also changing. Technology is influencing these rural areas so that large numbers of children are no longer an asset as they were years ago. Family size has declined from as many as 10-15 children per family to two, three, and four. More and more family heads are no longer farming. Sex roles are also changing especially among younger families where some women work outside the home and more emphasis on equality of the sexes is growing. Biblical names like John, Peter, Jacob, Mary and Sarah have been substituted largely by more modern names.

Most of the ethnic groups in the area are in many ways still an enclavic community, and this is also reflected in their attitudes toward ethnic and religious intermarriage. Two-thirds (69 percent) of the Mennonites opposed religious intermarriage. First generation Mennonites were almost all opposed, while some decline occurred in the second and third generations.<sup>15</sup>

The extent of actual endogamy for all ten groups is very high. Almost all Mennonites (98 percent) also married other Mennonites. These nine ethnic and religious groups have been able to maintain such a very high rate of endogamy because of their enclavic ethnic community solidarity, their ethnic cultural maintenance, and their strong adherence to religious practice. All ethnic adherents in the area are suspicious of any alien intrusion which might hinder a strong religious family.

With the construction of the new highway, increased commuting to work in the city involving status mobility, Mennonites and other groups in the area are doubly concerned about the control of social change and continuity. How will physical mobility and rural depopulation actually affect the preservation of ethnic and religious identities and family solidarity? Whether conservative or liberal, most residents in the area wish to maintain a strong family, a vital rural community, and their religious and cultural values. As yet divorce is practically non-existent, intermarriage is also extremely low, and they wish to keep it that way. The threat of foreign invasion by companies such as Eldorado Nuclear, worries them and most are against such threats.

#### Religious Ideology

The Mennonites settled in the Hague-Osler-Warman area mainly because of their religion. Culture and land were seen as the crucible in which their most valued prize could be nurtured and cradled. They began as part of the Protestant reformation in the 1500s, were driven up the mountainsides of Switzerland, and into the polders of the Netherlands. Horst Penner has recently documented the major role Mennonites played in reclaiming the swamps of the Vistula delta around Danzig; P.M. Friesen documents their transformation of the steppes of southern Russia into wheatfields; E.K. Francis documents their life in Manitoba, and in Saskatchewan we can see the results of 100 years of labor on land which was known as the "prairie desert".<sup>16</sup> However, when their religion was threatened, they made great sacrifices (often emigration), to preserve their driving ideology.

The salience of Mennonite ideology should not be underestimated.<sup>17</sup> We are presently witnessing the power of ideology in Quebec, among the native



peoples, in northern Ireland and most recently in Iran. Anderson's (1972) study of church attendance for example shows that 86 percent of the Mennonites in the area attend church regularly.<sup>18</sup> Rural people in general are high attenders, and Mennonites as well as others are faithful attenders. Their religious institutional networks are also well developed with two Mennonite churches in Osler, two in Warman, others in Martensville, Hague, Neuhorst, Neuanlage, Blumenheim, in other villages and in the country.

Of the twenty religious groups listed in the 1981 Census of Canada, the Mennonites were the only group near fifty percent rural. However, the Mennonites are urbanizing faster than any other religious group at present.<sup>19</sup> The network of rural villages and town churches has begun to reach into Saskatoon where there are now a dozen Mennonite churches. This transformation from a rural into an urban church has escalated even more in Winnipeg for example, where there are now 40 Mennonite churches. Mennonites in this region and elsewhere are in the midst of adapting their ideology and heritage to the changing forces of urbanization and industrialization. Being in the throes of rethinking and reworking their theology, they are doubly concerned that change take place gradually, and in an orderly fashion. Any unexpected or foreign new invasions are viewed with caution and suspicion. Eldorado's early probing of the area under tight wraps, when first discovered, created deep suspicion. The government <sup>by</sup> ~~is~~ again trying to pull an unjust act to undermine our belief structures many suspected. It had happened many times before, it would happen again, they feared.

In the reevaluation of their faith they discovered several major original tenets of their faith, especially non-resistance and the objection to war. They took the ten commandments literally, including "Thou shalt not kill". Bounded by the teachings of Jesus to "love", and the heritage of

the Anabaptists and Menno Simons to exercise non-violence, Mennonites did not see how any industry even remotely related to nuclear energy and the nuclear bomb could be compatible. They prided themselves in being known as objectors to war, and growers of food which would feed the hungry of the world. While most feel they cannot fight, they can in return feed the hungry which Jesus and the Bible commanded, which is consistent with their understanding of the gospel. This is their image of themselves and their mission.

They feared that should a spill of chemicals occur while it is transported to the site of the refinery, the papers would be full of another industrial tragedy as it was in Mississauga, or Biopal or Three-Mile-Island. Chemicals, not food would be symbolized. They feared that the underground water could be contaminated, the milk they produced might be harmed, and sold to others as poison. Again, poison not good food, would be symbolized. They feared that somehow refined uranium might be turned into nuclear bombs which emerged from their community. Again, bombs not butter would be highlighted. They feared that the air and the soil might be contaminated so that their wheatfields would be turned into desert. Again, contamination and mismanagement would be highlighted, not conservation and stewardship of God's earth.

Most Mennonites and others in the area saw the proposed uranium refinery as an alien industry, completely unrelated to their aspirations and ideals. In this volume Gail McConnel tells the Warman story, where the "little guy" takes on the corporation. This time capitalism did not ride roughshod over democracy. It is an "everyone" story with "universal" appeal.

---Leo Driedger

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Charles Dawson's Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada, MacMillan, Toronto, 1936, is one of nine volumes published as the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement series, devoted to the opening of the West. He did an extensive study of Mennonites in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the first major study of five prairie ethno-religious groups.
2. Alan Anderson's Assimilation in Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan: A Comparative Study of Identity Change Among Seven Ethno-Religious Groups in a Canadian Prairie Region, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1972, is a thorough study of ethnic groups surrounding the Warman area. Some of his findings have also been published in journals, and his data will be used here.
3. F.G. Stanley, Louis Riel, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1963.
4. Leo Driedger's A Sect in a Modern Society: The Old Colony Mennonites of Saskatchewan, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1955, is an indepth study of the Mennonites in the Hague-Osler-Warman area.
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6. Warman hearings on Mennonites and the schools, Provincial Archives, Saskatoon, 1908.

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8. Driedger, Old Colony Mennonites, 1955; Richard Friesen, Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Saskatchewan: A Study in Settlement Change, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1975.
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10. Herbert Peters, "Martensville: Half-House to Urbanization," Mennonite Life 23:4 (October, 1968), 164-168.
11. A.J. Vidich and E. Benson, Small Town in Mass Society, Harper, New York, 1960; and Kenneth Westhues and D. Sinclair, Village in Transition, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Toronto, 1972.
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13. Anderson, Bloc Settlements, 1972.
14. Driedger, Old Colony Mennonites, 1955; and Driedger, Mennonite Life, 32:4 (December, 1977), 4-12.
15. Anderson, Bloc Settlements, 1972.
16. Horst Penner, Die Ost- und Westpreussischen Mennoniten, Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, Karlsruhe, 1978; P.M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789-1910, Christian Press, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1978; E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia, D.W. Friesen, Altona, Manitoba, 1955.
17. Leo Driedger, "Doctrinal Belief: A Major Factor in the Differential Perception of Social Issues," Sociological Quarterly 15:66-80, 1974.
18. Anderson, Bloc Settlements, 1972.
19. Leo Driedger, "Canadian Mennonite Urbanism: Ethnic Villagers or Metropolitan Remnant?" Mennonite Quarterly Review 49:226-241, 1975.

## 1. PROLOGUE

This is the story of the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group, a rural Saskatchewan "David" that faced off with a giant and won.

In the summer of 1976 farm people between Saskatoon and Warman (a small, mostly Mennonite town about 18 kilometers north of the city) became aware that a provincial crown corporation, Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO) was trying to buy options on a large amount of land in the district. Almost immediately, they discovered that the real buyer was Eldorado Nuclear Limited, a federal crown corporation already heavily involved in the expanding uranium mining industry in the province. Eldorado, it was later revealed, was proposing to build a \$100 million uranium refinery close to the South Saskatchewan River. It was to be capable of producing 9000 tonnes of uranium hexafluoride ( $UF_6$ ) annually for 30 years.

An ad hoc group came together almost immediately to protest, and lobbied vigorously with the landowners to hold off selling. The sales were delayed, but by late fall SEDCO had options on 1200 acres of farmland. That first winter, a handful of people met in a church basement in nearby Osler to consider how they might continue opposition to the proposal, and in the spring of 1977 launched the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group. They gathered a membership of about 40 people, and with no experience of protest action or lobbying, entered into the growing debate on the uranium industry in the province. Three years later, by January of 1980, when the hearings on the Eldorado proposal were held, they had a membership of over 800, and had emerged as a major voice in that debate.

The community in which the Concerned Citizens began turned out in force to register their opposition at the hearings. The response overwhelmed even the organizers. Because of them the panel appointed by the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office (FEARO) recommended that no decision be made on the proposal to build a refinery near Warman until further information on its potential social impact was provided by the company, and again reviewed at public hearings. Alternatively, the company could look at other sites, but only if adequate social impact studies were carried out first.

Eldorado responded by withdrawing its plans to build in Saskatchewan, and eventually constructed additional refining facilities in Ontario. In October 1980 a quiet but joyful celebration was held in the Osler school gymnasium. The guests were treated to speeches over a fasp of borscht, bread, pie and coffee provided by the ladies of the Old Colony Mennonite Church.

"For the first time in the history of such hearings," Edgar Epp told them, "a panel has handed down a decision recognizing that the human environment is just as important as the physical environment." Bill Harding from Regina was there, representing the many agencies and churches outside the Warman area who had also opposed the refinery. He has seen a lifetime of intense personal involvement in community issues in Saskatchewan, and he reminded the group that they had not stood alone. "It was a people movement."

"We were up against big business, big money and big government," Nettie Wiebe recalled, "and it looked like an impossible thing to

stop. Our celebration today shows that these three powerful forces can be met if a community of people cooperate and organize."<sup>1</sup>

David had defeated Goliath, but the hurrahs were muted. They were triumphant, but not gloating, because unlike David they had not been facing separate tribes virtually unknown to them. Their quarrel had been largely with members of the same community, divided against itself on a question of its own development. "No single event in recent Saskatchewan history has so polarized the community as has the prospect of a uranium refinery being built near Warman," a local television reporter commented shortly after the January 1980 hearings.<sup>2</sup>

The polarization affected every part of the community. Families, congregations, political parties, the Mennonite community and the provincial community were divided on the whole issue of uranium development. The Warman refinery proposal became the focus of the wide ranging debate on the uranium industry which encompassed environmental, economic, social and moral questions in the province.

The many interpretations of the term "Local control of development" illustrate how divisive the uranium question became. Although the principle of local control was embraced on every side as a good thing, those who thought of "local" as "Warman and district" found themselves in opposition to the provincial government, which defined local control in terms of provincial control of resource development and revenues. At the federal level, which included the federal government, the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB), and the crown corporation Eldorado itself, "local" meant Canada as a trading nation competing in an international market.

The fact that uranium is a strategic mineral complicated the issue even further. Since the establishment of the AECB by an act of parliament in 1946 that agency has regulated who would work in the area of atomic energy and under what conditions. However, uranium is also a provincial resource and hence the door is opened to a classically Canadian federal/provincial clash over jurisdiction and responsibility. As late as the spring and summer of 1979 the provincial government professed to regard the proposed federal hearings as only part of the examination process. Then minister of the environment Ted Bowerman in particular was emphasizing the province's right to make the final decision.<sup>3</sup>

Over the three to four years of its active life the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group (WDCCG) became the core of one pole of the divided community. The role was a painful one for the participants, because the differences were so intensely felt and so close to home. It is also a more complex role to recall and to reconstruct than that of the single-minded defender against an "outside" enemy. The Mennonite story in Saskatchewan, the development pressures on the Rural Municipality of Corman Park in which Warman is situated, the resource boom that was fuelling the economy and the aspirations of the province as a whole, all played their part in shaping the story.

The WDCCG itself attempted to avoid a merely adversarial stance. Especially in the beginning, their position was one of questioning rather than simply opposing the refinery. In effect they were making a tacit appeal to Mennonite congregational tradition, a tradition of group examination of an issue until a consensus is reached, in raising the issue in this manner. As time went on, and as their own doubts hardened into certainties, they inevitably came to accept the role of "official opposition"



that the media saw them occupying virtually from the start. However, they continued to press their view of the debate over the refinery as a community process, and were to some extent able to impose that view on the hearings as well.

Their awareness of the community's values and dynamics, while sometimes inhibiting, was also one of their strengths. At their beginning as an organized protest group they were intimidated by the barrage of technical information and experts that they were up against. At least, they reassured each other, we are experts in living in our community. Eventually they surprised themselves with unsuspected capacities for writing and presenting briefs, for critiquing technical reports and for organizing expert testimony on their own behalf. It was Eldorado's failure to take the community into account that was the dominant factor in defeating the refinery proposal.

From the beginning their concerns about the refinery were expressed in moral terms. Jake Buhler and Jim Robbins made the first tentative statement early in July 1976 in a letter to the editor of The Saskatchewan Valley News, the Rosthern weekly that serves the area. Buhler's and Robbins' wives, Louise and Nettie Wiebe, were sisters. The young couples were farming with Louise and Nettie's father, John Wiebe, whose land was in the area in which Eldorado was interested, and who was considering an offer from SEDCO. Nevertheless, Jake and Jim felt compelled to question the proposal, and to raise the issue for discussion in the community. "What is of concern is the disposal of certain wastes," they wrote. "A decision without consideration of the issues in their full scope would be disregarding man's initial command to have responsible dominion over the earth." They

brought forward what would become the heart of the issue for most of them: "The land in question is nearly all owned by Mennonites. A nuclear processing plant should provide somewhat of a contradiction in the Anabaptist tradition."<sup>4</sup>

Some members of the community saw their efforts as simply resisting change, denying the community an opportunity for economic growth. They halted a development which had offered millions of dollars of capital investment, possibly hundreds of jobs, at least in the construction stage, and a new level of sophistication in the provincial economy. Saskatchewan was already mining uranium; they could have been refining it too. So the victory was, from another point of view, a loss. The "concerneds", as they came to be called, were willing to pay that price for what they perceived to be the protection of the integrity of their community. Their success meant that everyone paid the price.

It was a story that begged to be told, but the three years of work and conflict had taken their toll of the participants. Peter Froese, perhaps the oldest member of the organizing committee of the WDCCG, was frankly dubious about recreating the story. His ambivalence was shared by many. "When those hearings were over I was just kind of glad," he said. "I thought, it's over, and we sort of won it, and now let's just forget about it. In a way I didn't approve of digging it all up again. But I understand that there is some good in it too. There will be people who will need help, too, in the future, and they will look for it from people who had similar experiences."

It was the summer of 1984, and four of us were sitting around the Froese dining room table when Peter made his observations. Leonard

Doell, a young farmer in the district who had been at the Swift Current Bible School for post-high school training when the refinery campaign began, had joined us so he and Peter could jog each other's memory of the events leading up to the hearings four years ago. Joe Froese, one of Peter's sons, made a fourth. He is a local trucker.

Through the window opposite me I could just see the highway to Waldheim in the dusk. The Froese farm is on Highway 12, which runs straight north from Saskatoon through the centre of the valley between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. Most of the names on the RM map of the area are Mennonite -- Reddekopp, Friesen, Boldt, Martens. Just south of the Froese farm some of the quarter sections have been divided and sold as "hobby" farms; one of the names is another colleague from the WDCCG, Van Pinxteren. Jeanne Van Pinxteren was the treasurer. She and her husband Emil, both originally from Holland, have now retired from the magazine and book agency they ran in Saskatoon. Jeanne has since created a "cottage industry" with an international market as a doll-maker and repairer.

Peter remembered how close to home divisions in the community were. A brother-in-law and a cousin were active supporters of the refinery proposal, "So we had to be a little careful, too, that it didn't backfire, and try to stay friends." It was an anxiety he shared with many in the closely-knit community as the campaign unfolded.

I had been introduced to Peter Froese and Leonard Doell at a reunion of the WDCCG core group earlier in the summer. We met in the living room of Jake and Louise Buhler's home, on the land originally farmed by Louise's father, which had been part of the initial options purchase. Through the living room window at that gathering we could see the South

Saskatchewan less than a mile away. We could not help but reflect that there might have been refinery emission stacks in our view; the story might have turned out very differently.

Jake and Louise had been away for four years, working on Mennonite relief and development projects in south-east Asia, out of Bangkok, Thailand. Meeting people in their home community again, Jake reflected, "usually the topic comes back sooner or later to the refinery. And the people I identify with usually say, 'I'm sure glad it's over with.' Some of the people were active members, others weren't. There's both sides. There's people who are extremely happy and there's some people who are still very upset, even four years after."

Jake had been principal of the Martensville elementary school and secretary for the group during the campaign against the refinery proposal. He and Louise left for their posting almost as soon as it became clear no refinery would be built in the area. Nettie Wiebe, one of Louise's younger sisters, is also present, with her husband, Jim Robbins, whose father was a cabinet minister in the Saskatchewan NDP government during the whole period. They have brought their children for a visit with their Buhler cousins. Probably the youngest member there is Gary Boldt, who was just finishing high school at the time the campaign started, and is now farming with his parents and older brother.

Edgar Epp, whose own family of six are now mostly independent, in 1976 had just returned to the area from British Columbia, where he had worked with the Barrett government as Deputy Minister of Corrections. His distinguished career in corrections (he had worked in both Ontario and B.C., and at the time of his appointment was the youngest deputy minister in the

B.C. government service) was cut short by the election of the Social Credit government under Bill Bennett. He had returned to work with the Saskatchewan Mennonite Central Committee as Director of Offender Ministries.

Wilf and Ruth Buhler came to the meeting as well, from the dairy farm they operate with yet another Buhler brother, Ben, on the far side of Warman. They were active only during the final period of organizing for the hearings, and have come to offer their perspective, as spectators drawn into participation at the crisis, to the discussion of how the story should be told. Missing are Ernie Hildebrand, a young Mennonite minister, who was chairman of the group at the beginning, now teaching at a Bible School in Swift Current, and Sam Rempel, a Saskatoon businessman who also had been part of the group almost from the beginning.

"The healing process is still going on," Leonard Doell commented. "I had a conversation with two people last week, and the issue again came up that if it had gone ahead there'd be work for people in the area."

Edgar Epp agreed with him. "I suppose it will be around as long as there are the problems like that shopping centre [in Warman] being only one-third completed. I have found it very interesting that when the independent grocers lost their businesses in Warman because of competition that started up in the shopping centre, the blame tended to go toward our group, rather than to the company that had moved into their territory. The thought being that there would have been enough for all of us if the thing had gone through."

But they refused to be bullied by might-have-beens. Jake Buhler reminded the group, "as far as unemployment was concerned, at the time of the hearings Saskatoon in particular was the city with the lowest unemploy-

ment in Canada. So that was never used by anybody in terms of statistics, because that wasn't an issue."

"But locally that seemed to always be a play that Eldorado could use," Leonard said. Jake agreed, "Yes, they pushed it along by saying there would be -- how many jobs? -- some hundreds during construction. But after, when they were pushed on it they said, well, maybe about, what, 30 people -- janitors and a few other people -- that would come from this community."

Edgar Epp commented, "It's interesting though that a lot of people heard that earlier figure, they did not hear the later figure. It was almost grasping at straws, you know. We're going to boom! One of the most incredible stories was that young couple with the child that showed up with the Alberta license plates. They came here, didn't they? They were looking for work in a mine they had 'heard' was going to open here."

Jake remembers their coming onto the yard too. "And all their worldly possessions were in the little beat up car that they had," he recalled.

Ernie summed up their feelings about the "boom" they missed, "So the unemployment rate in Warman could have been much higher. A lot of people might have come hoping to get jobs, might have got construction jobs, then hung around afterwards, and they'd still be here. They wouldn't have work. It's terribly hard to build scenarios as to what's going to happen one way or the other."

"There was an awful lot of speculation," someone recalled. "Wasn't it half a million dollars for one quarter section finally? Changed hands three or four times... [S] just lost his shirt that way. He'd been

speculating in land." Some of the speculators were from the Mennonite community, they remember sadly.

But they couldn't remain sad about it for long.

"There was one real estate agent said to his niece and nephew, 'We wish that they would just be quiet so this thing could boom.'" Edgar Epp was talking, and he grinned in anticipation of his punch line. "And somebody suggested it might!" Then he's serious again. "The niece and nephew were from another province, but they were with us in terms of their tacit support. You know there were those kinds of divisions within families, and within the community."

What was true of the community immediately affected by the refinery issue was true of the larger community. Nearly five years after the hearings which decided the fate of Eldorado Nuclear's proposal, a small headline appeared over a letter on the "Forum" page of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix asking, "Where are 'concerned citizens'?" The writer, Dr. Henry Caplan, a member of the University of Saskatchewan's physics department, had seized the occasion of the explosion of a gas refinery in a working class area of Mexico City, the Tlalnepantla neighbourhood, to observe, "not a word has been heard from 'concerned citizens groups' who could be questioning the safety of gas storage systems in Canada." On the other hand, Dr. Caplan wrote, "Please contrast that reaction with what happens if a trivial event occurs in any aspect of the nuclear energy system. Even if no one is injured or killed, the news media have a two-week bonanza and the 'concerned citizens' are out in force." Dr. Caplan's letter went on, rather bitterly:

Let me remind readers that the people in Mexico are really dead and those burned are really burned. They are not probabilities of death or injury in the next thirty years.

Nuclear energy is a relatively safe, clean and cheap way of generating electricity and our society will need it in the near future.

I can understand opposition to it from people who perceive a link between power stations and bombs, but to attack nuclear power on the grounds of safety and environmental impact serves merely to reduce the credibility of those people trying to do something about real dangers and real environmental problems.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Caplan's bitterness was that of a man who had tried to preach moderation when those about him were arguing for all or nothing. Apart from his professional interest in uranium development, he had been, at that time of the Eldorado proposal, a member of the NDP provincial council, and endorsed the government's support for expansion in the industry. However, he was, as he put it, "in favour of power stations and against bombs."<sup>6</sup>

Ernie Hildebrand is one member of the group with painful memories of division within the community. He was pastor of the Osler Mennonite Church in 1976, and had made the uranium issue a concern in his ministry. Many in his congregation had objected to their minister taking a public stand on what appeared to them to be a political and economic issue rather than a moral or religious one. It became impossible for him to carry on, and the summer of their success as a concerned citizens group found the Hildebrand family on their way to Swift Current, where Ernie has since taught as a member of the faculty of the Swift Current Bible Institute.

I visited the Hildebrands on their five acres just south of Swift Current. It was August, two months after the reunion near Warman, and the south-west was very dry. Standing on the edge of their acreage I



could hear the steady dry buzz of locust jaws devouring the neighbour's crop. The Hildebrands' land is an oasis of carefully tended vegetable garden and windbreaks. There were milk goats in a small barn on the far side of the property, and chickens in a shed close to the house. Much of the labour is supplied by the four Hildebrand children, the eldest of whom was still in high school. They are proud of being nearly self-sufficient, of having developed something positive out of a painful upheaval for the family.

"I think that if Eldorado had not picked Warman as a site," Ernie said, "I would probably still be in pastoral ministry. Not necessarily at Osler, because we do rotate, every six to 10 years, but to some extent my involvement spoiled it for myself to have very much future in pastoral work. There's a limited number of congregations who would find me acceptable as a minister, because people see me as a peace activist, which I'm really not. I happened to be in a situation there that was one that called for participation, and I did that, but I wasn't an activist when I came to Osler. I just basically responded to what was needed there."

The opposition to Ernie's surprising "activism" was to some extent separate from the uranium issue. Any opposition to duly constituted governments was frowned on by many, whether or not the "activist" was a pastor as well. Paul's exegesis, in Romans 13, on Jesus' answer to the Pharisee's question about imperial taxes -- to pay to Caesar what is due to Caesar, and to God what is due to God -- became the basis for a tradition of accommodating to temporal authority as long as it did not make demands contrary to religious belief.

Jake Buhler remembered that the tradition that since God has established government you shouldn't really fight it was a constraint on the WDCCG from the beginning. "You can go about, you can leave if you wish, but you can't really fight the government because you're tampering with something that has been installed with providential blessings, as it were."

Since then, the accident at the Chernobyl reactor in the Ukraine has demonstrated with dreadful clarity the far reaching, and long term consequences of a major industrial nuclear accident. Half a year after the April 26, 1986 accident the Soviet Union was officially estimating that 6300 people would die as a result of the accident. Crops and animals were contaminated in large parts of Europe. A five year ban placed on the slaughter of reindeer will effectively destroy the livelihood of Lapp herders in Scandanavia. In the Ukraine over 100,000 people will have to permanently abandon their homes because of the Chernobyl accident, and 10,000 square kilometers have been declared unfit for human habitation. In the Chernobyl meltdown only 3% of the uranium by-products in the reactor actually escaped into the environment; the containment building was inadequate protection against the consequences of a breakdown.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of such a conflict the Mennonite tradition had been not to confront the authorities but to withdraw, as they had done from religious and civil persecution in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, and in the 19th and 20th centuries from Russia to Canada, and in the post-First World War period from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay. The possibility that some might leave the area if a refinery were to be built was never raised as an argument by the WDCCG, but they were aware

of it. At the hearings in 1980 one member of the panel, Reg Lang, asked Reverend John Reddekopp point blank, "Would it cause people to leave the area?" Reverend Reddekopp, who had spoken against the refinery on behalf of the Bergthaler Mennonite congregation, said simply that it was too early for him to answer that. On the other hand, Sam Rempel, a member of the WDCCG working group who spoke shortly after Reverend Reddekopp on the same evening, could, and did, speak for his family. "If Eldorado is given the green light on this proposal, my family and I would have to move from the community, leaving behind, at quite a loss, all that we have worked for." Part of what they had worked for was Rempel Bros. Construction Company of Saskatoon, a business employing from 60 to 100 people, depending on the season, which the Rempel brothers had built up "starting right from scratch."<sup>8</sup>

The tradition of non-confrontation, however, had its beneficial side too. Jake Buhler raised the question at the reunion, "Don't you think that they [the panel] were better able to handle the confrontational type of briefs? While everybody was saying, 'How come you've got all your people sitting at that table and none of ours?' Whereas the Mennonite people, by and large, said, 'You are our representatives, the ball is in your court. May God help you to make a good decision.' I think somehow that had a bigger impact."

Judy Hildebrand remembered that much of the opposition to her husband's actions came from the tradition of seeing Mennonites as "the quiet of the land." Many associate the tradition with religious teaching, but Ernie sees it as an outcome of Mennonite history. "We were forced into that through very severe persecution, during the first century of the

Mennonite church's existence, where the people had to flee." Sixteenth century Mennonites, most of them educated, urban people, were obliged to flee the cities. The migration to Russia accentuated the tendency to withdrawal. Hildebrand observed, "One of the requirements of the Russian government was that the Mennonite people were not to try and convert their Russian neighbours. So when people today speak of being the quiet in the land, I don't really see it as something that Jesus in the New Testament advocates. You know, 'be ye quiet in the land' is not one of the beautitudes," he said, laughing. "But 'Blessed are the peacemakers' is."

## FOOTNOTES

1. WDCCG News Release, October 1980, signed "Edgar Epp", p.8.
2. "Warman Refinery" 30 minute News Program, Producer/Reporter Art Babych, CFQC-TV, Saskatoon, January 1980.
3. SP, 31 Jan. 1979, p.15, "Uranium inquiry urged"; ibid., 13 June 1979, p.1, "NDP nuclear policy booed"; ibid., 13 June 1979, "Federal uranium inquiry supported by Bowerman."
4. SVN, 8 July 1976, p.2.
5. SP, Wednesday, 28 November 1984, p.A5.
6. Pers. com., Dr. Henry Caplan, Saskatoon.
7. Peter Prebble, "Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Declaration," Focus (Community Health Services Association, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan) 22:5 (Sept.-Oct. 1986), 5.
8. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, Transcript, XVIII, 2543.

## Abbreviations:

EEAP, Eldorado Environmental Assessment Panel.

SP, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.

SVN, The Saskatchewan Valley News.

WDCCG, Warman and District Concerned Citizen Group.



## 2. THE BEGINNING

The "concerned citizens" story began in June 1976. One day in the late prairie spring two representatives of SEDCO drove onto the yard of John Wiebe's farm near Warman. Without revealing who they represented, they wanted to know if Mr. Wiebe was interested in selling his land.

John Wiebe was away on vacation, and they spoke instead to his daughter Nettie, home for the summer with her husband, Jim Robbins. Nettie and Jim hoped eventually to get into farming themselves (they have since done so near Laura, Saskatchewan), and were spending the summer of 1976 as "apprentices" on the Wiebe family farm. Jim was working with his father-in-law and his brother-in-law, Jake Buhler, and Nettie was a graduate student in philosophy working for the summer at the library of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

The possibility of selling the farm had already been discussed around the supper table. Nettie knew "for a fact" that her father was ready to retire and get off the land. However, she was as reluctant to tell the mysterious buyers of her father's thinking as they were to tell her what the land was wanted for. They were willing to say that some kind of industrial use was contemplated, perhaps a factory, or, more vaguely still, an industrial park.

In most farm communities the sale of the farm, whether within the family or outside of it, provides the "pension" that enables farmers to retire. Ordinarily Nettie would not have been secretive about her father's plans, even though she and Jim were at the head of the list of possible buyers. However, she already had a fairly good idea who was behind the move, and neither she nor Jim, nor some of the other younger members of the large Wiebe family, wanted them as neighbours.

Over coffee one day a friend on campus had told her that he had accidentally seen some correspondence not intended for his eyes. He knew she lived near Warman, and thought she should know Eldorado Nuclear was planning to build a refinery in the area. Nettie never divulged his name, because, she said, "He feared for his job." Although he no longer does so, it seems to her polite to continue to maintain his anonymity.

So the question was raised -- what would they think of selling to a buyer like that? And the family divided on the issue, just as later people in the community and ultimately the province were to choose sides. For Nettie and Jim there was no question. They could not support, or even passively condone, any expansion of the nuclear industry in the province. However, their attitude was not, initially, a popular one either within their own circles or in the larger community.

Uranium has been mined in Saskatchewan since 1953, when Eldorado Nuclear Limited opened the Beaverlodge Mine near Lake Athabasca. It was then called Eldorado Mining and Refining Ltd., and had originally been the Eldorado Gold Mines Ltd., owned by Gilbert and Charles Labine. In 1942 C. D. Howe, with the help of Gilbert Labine, began secretly buying up stock in the company for the Canadian government, at the urging of the British government who were anxious to secure supplies of uranium oxide for the Manhattan Project research then being carried on jointly with the United States and Canada. In 1944 the company was nationalized under a new name. The company's claims at Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories were the only known source of uranium outside of the Belgian Congo (now Zaire) and a small amount in Russia. The Manhattan Project eventually produced the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs.



The industry boomed during the '50s, and Uranium City was created on the shore of Lake Athabasca in northern Saskatchewan to house the workers in an industry that had ten mines and three mills in operation in the province at its peak. The industry collapsed in the '60s however, after American purchasing contracts ended in 1959 and were not renewed.<sup>1</sup>

In the early '70s the quadrupling of the price of oil engineered by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) precipitated an increase in interest in alternative energy sources, and in particular in northern Saskatchewan uranium. By 1976, when the possibility of a uranium refinery at Warman was still just a rumor in the local community, Saskatchewan was in the grip of a renewed uranium boom. In 1975, at Rabbit Lake, Gulf Minerals Limited and Uranertz Exploration and Mining Limited had opened a new mine, the first for many years. Gulf Minerals is a wholly owned subsidiary of the energy giant Gulf Oil Corporation of Pittsburg, USA, and Uranertz is a subsidiary of Uranertz Canada Limited, owned and controlled in turn by UranerzbergbauGmbH, an energy company based in West Germany which controls one-third of West Germany's electrical generating capacity.<sup>2</sup>

In addition a third company, Amok Limited, had applied for permission to develop a new uranium ore body at Cluff Lake, north of La Loche. Amok is owned by a French consortium; the French Government agency Commissariat à l'énergie atomique owns 30%, and Rothschild interests account for a large part of the remaining interest in the company.<sup>3</sup> In 1979 the Saskatchewan government corporation, Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation (SMDC) acquired a 20% interest in the Cluff Lake operation. The Amok application led eventually to the appointment of a public inquiry into the development of the uranium industry in the province, which was the

province's, and the WDCCG's, first experience of public examination of the industry.

The provincial government became an active partner in the northern mining development through SMDC, which was created in 1974 by an order-in-council and established in 1977 by a special act of the legislature.<sup>5</sup> The corporation is empowered to explore, develop, mine, refine and market mineral resources. Legislation in March of 1975 ensured that the province would be a participant in northern development, as it required that companies planning to spend more than \$10,000 on a property in northern Saskatchewan have been obliged to offer SMDC 50% of the venture.<sup>6</sup>

A government presentation to the First Minister's Conference held in January 1974 outlined the Saskatchewan scenario for development of the industry in the province. It included establishment of processing capability in the province, fabrication of fuel elements, heavy water production and eventually the creation of nuclear-based electrical energy generating facilities. The argument supporting the proposal to create what would be a relatively huge generating capacity in a small market was that the province could then emphasize exporting electrical energy rather than uranium to the United States. It was a scenario for progressive, staged, development, from the refinery, to an enrichment plant to power generation to a full reprocessing plant.<sup>7</sup>

In the spring of 1975, a year before SEDCO had come looking for land in the Warman area, the NDP government had prorogued the legislature after passing a record-breaking budget -- the first in the history of the province to pass one billion dollars. It was a remarkable turn around for a province which still had a population of less than one million, and which

had been one of the "have not" provinces, and a recipient of federal equalization grants, up until 1966.

In a mood of boundless economic confidence the provincial NDP party then made the resource development issue the major element in their 1975 election platform. "Basically the NDP proposes greater emphasis on resource development, processing and research within the province through expanding direct involvement of the government," a Saskatchewan daily reported in an article comparing the platforms of the different parties. It quoted NDP leader Allan Blakeney as saying, "I think the first major issue is resources, how our resources should be developed and in particular who should get the major benefit from the development of Saskatchewan resources." Tommy Douglas, the grand old man of the party and a former Saskatchewan premier himself, told an audience in Saskatoon's Centennial Auditorium that "The real issue of the campaign is the confrontation between the federal and provincial governments," on two key fronts, one of which was the "resources issue."<sup>8</sup>

The party was presenting itself in a role calculated to appeal to prairie voters, that of the beleaguered westerner fighting eastern interests and Ottawa for his rightful share of the Canadian pie. The "resources" at issue were never very clearly specified during the 1975 campaign; most public attention was focused on the bickering between the western provinces and the federal government over oil and gas revenues, which was eventually (temporarily) settled by the imposition of the National Energy Program of 1980 by the Liberal government in Ottawa under Trudeau.

Allan Blakeney's campaign statements on who should benefit were uncompromising. "The government of Saskatchewan has taken the position

that the companies which develop the resources and the government of Saskatchewan should get the major benefit." The issue appeared to him to be, "which government at Regina can speak best for the people of Saskatchewan and the people of the West in retaining a substantial share of the returns from developing our resources so that the money can be used to diversify our economy?"<sup>9</sup>

The economics of uranium were simple and appealing -- more jobs in an industry expanded to include processing as well as mining, and more profit from the sale of a refined product added to the sale of raw materials. On the horizon were even more alluring if less well-defined benefits -- possible spin-offs in technological development from a university with strong scientific and engineering departments, and a long history of work in applied and theoretical radiation chemistry and physics that was already fostering the beginnings of a high tech industry in the city of Saskatoon.

The university in question, the University of Saskatchewan, had been involved with applications of atomic research since the Second World War. Dr. John W. T. Spinks, who was president of the University at the time the Warman refinery was being debated, had worked with the highly secret Montreal group established by the Canadian and British governments to work with the Manhattan project. He had returned to the university to pioneer in the peaceful applications of the new knowledge. He had initiated the use of radioactive "tracers" to determine the uptake of nutrients by plants, which made possible precise and accurate recommendations for using chemicals, especially fertilizers, in farming.

The medical and engineering colleges had worked together to create a beam therapy unit for cancer treatment using cobalt 60 (Saskatoon

is still the provincial centre for cancer treatment), and by the early 1950s a set of exposure tables had been published by the research group which became a manual for medical practitioners using cobalt therapy all over North America.<sup>10</sup> Thirty years later the university had a linear accelerator and an electron ring in its physics establishment, the National Research Council had a large (and expanding) complex on the campus, and research was being conducted on mine tailings in the uranium cycle and on the disposal of high level radioactive wastes underground. The Saskatchewan Government Uranium Policy Position Paper presented to the January 1974 meeting of first ministers of Canada had also discussed the establishment of a nuclear research institute at the university. SED Systems Limited (one of the major bidders in 1985 on contracts to provide telemetry systems to the telesat North Warning System being installed for NORAD) had developed out of just such an institute created by the physics department to carry out technical research and development in upper atmospheric studies.

There were other economic and social pressures closer to home in the Warman area. The land SEDCO was shopping for is in the RM of Corman Park, a rural municipality created in 1970 by the union of three smaller units (the RMs of Cory, Park and Warman), entirely surrounding the City of Saskatoon. Saskatoon is a growing city, and by the summer of 1976 urban pressures on land in the RM and conflicts over land use were already troubling the Corman Park Council.

The immediate conflict was between city people wanting to have a home in the country and rural residents wanting to maintain the agricultural character of the municipality. The RM Council had tried to control the incursion of these "rurbanites" into Corman Park by creating a "hobby farm" zoning category to accommodate them. But the RM found that extra

residences were springing up on full-sized farms, creating unofficial subdivisions not covered by their zoning by-laws.<sup>13</sup> The second largest town contained by the RM, Martensville, had sprung into being in just such a fashion some 20 years earlier, when Dave Martens sold three parcels of his farmland in 1953 to friends from Saskatoon who wanted to live in the country, and to escape city taxes. By the following year there were half-a-dozen homes on the former farm property beside Highway 11, about 10 miles north of the city, and by 1960 there were 100 homes, two churches and a school, as well as some commercial establishments. Many of the buildings, including the two churches and the school, had been abandoned and in some cases condemned buildings that had been hauled in from adjacent communities, including the city. The planning headaches caused by this instant town-site were only beginning to be unravelled with the help of the planning branch of the provincial municipal affairs department. Martensville was still growing, and developers were still pressing for more land for mobile home parks in the mid-'70s, even though many lots in the centre of town remained vacant.<sup>14</sup>

Warman, 22 km north-east of Saskatoon, and the largest town in the RM (excluding Saskatoon) at just over 1100 residents, was trying to break out of its role as a "bedroom community" for the city by offering "industrial" acreages in the hope of attracting development to Warman that wanted the advantages of being close to the city without paying city land prices, or taxes.<sup>15</sup> The RM Council also wanted to tap the market for industrial land, hoping that the municipal coffers would benefit from an industrial tax base, not least because it was the RM coffers that were maintaining the roads that carried the commuters into the city every day. Even though the price Corman Park expected for an unserviced ten-acre plot

was only a fraction of what the City of Saskatoon asked for its fully serviced industrial acreages (approximately \$30,000 compared to about half-a-million dollars in the city), the price was considerably higher than the average for 10 acres of farmland (about \$1800).<sup>15</sup> Thus both industrial and residential pressures were warping land values in the area, and creating a speculative climate in which it was easy to believe that sooner or later the agricultural land in the district would be absorbed by one or other of the non-agricultural uses.

In the meantime, SEDCO put intense pressure on the landowners to decide quickly. Within days of the corporation's first approach to the Wiebes, arrangements had been made for a neighbour, Jake Siemens, to sign the sale papers. Nettie and Jim had checked on the map in the RM office to see who had title to the quarters in their vicinity. They then phoned around to see who had been approached, in an effort to discover exactly which land the company was interested in, and found that Jake was planning to go in to the city to sign the option papers the very next day. Nettie remembers being embarrassed to be challenging a neighbour on the sale of his own land, and grateful to Siemens for giving her an understanding hearing.

"I urged and pleaded with him to hold off because we thought there was something going on here, and that this might be for a uranium refinery, and there should be more time. I remember being really embarrassed about it, because this isn't something you do in the neighbourhood, but pleading with him on the phone that he shouldn't be hasty, that if it was a straight deal then they wouldn't pull out just for him not coming to sign that next day. If there was something wrong, then he should have a little more time to think about it. We wanted to talk to him first -- other people



wanted to talk to him first. And he held off then, as a matter of fact. He didn't go in the next morning to sign. He gave us a little more room. It helped a great deal then that there was a whole summer before they signed options, instead of two days. A whole summer during which we held meetings, during which we did public information, during which there was agitation."

The "agitation" was a new experience for all concerned, Nettie recalls. "None of us had a very clear picture of what a uranium refinery might be like. We really were very ignorant about it. I was completely uninformed about whether it would be dangerous or not, what the process was. All of us were. What did we know about uranium, other than the connection with weapons? Really, nothing. We hadn't been active in any of the anti-uranium mining campaigns or anything like that. We were completely out of that. I had never demonstrated against nuclear war, or anything. Nobody in that community had, as far as I know."

The community Nettie had in mind was not the RM of Corman Park but a far older community that pre-dated even the original components of the relatively new administrative structures. Warman is at the southern edge of the largest area of Mennonite settlement in the province, a block of land covering over 23 townships, running between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, from just south of Duck Lake to just north of Saskatoon. This area of nearly 900 square miles, set aside in 1893 under the Dominion government's group settlement policy, is known locally simply as "the valley". The "Valley Mennonites" came from Manitoba in the 1890s, where 8,000 Mennonites from Russia had settled in the 1870s, and from Prussia, from Ontario and from the United States.<sup>17</sup> The first village, Neuanlage, was established in 1895, the second, Reinland, in 1897.



The Mennonites had originally come to Canada after discussion between their representatives and those of the Canadian government had persuaded them that their beliefs and institutions would be respected in Canada. They left Russia after 100 years of peaceful coexistence because the increasingly nationalist Russians were pressing them to integrate, specifically to send their young men to the army and their children to Russian schools.

In July of 1873 John Lowe, secretary (in modern terms deputy minister) of the Dominion Department of Agriculture which was then directing the campaign for settlers for the Canadian west provided a letter covering some 15 items which the Mennonites understood to be a firm agreement with Canada regarding their "privileges". First and most important was an exemption from military service. However, land holding patterns and village organization were also very important to the integrity of the community of the faith. The federal government not only set aside contiguous blocks of land for Mennonite homesteaders, first in Manitoba and later in Alberta and Saskatchewan, it also waived the normal practice of holding back for sale the even-numbered sections in such a reserve. The Mennonites were also not required to erect dwellings on the quarter-sections they homesteaded, but could take out patents on land while living in communally-owned villages. The "agreement" offered a guarantee of "the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles" and of the education of their children, combining these in a single item, which is no doubt how the Mennonites saw them too.

While some of these arrangements were specifically tailored for Mennonites, they were not in principle different from the sort of agreement the Dominion government came to with many immigrant groups from the time of

the treaties with the Indians in western Canada to just before the First World War. The transcontinental railroad which was to tie the country together had to be paid for, and had to be made to pay, and settlement was essential to both parts of this financial problem. Group settlement arrangements were made for religious, ethnic, and racial groups, both immigrant and native, as part of the drive to get farmers on the land, with the result that even today Saskatchewan communities present, perhaps more than any other province in Canada, a "cultural mosaic".

Thus in the Saskatchewan valley a solid block of Mennonite agricultural settlement was created. Its core was self-governing one-street "Old Colony" villages, nearly all of which had their own churches and schools, each surrounded by the residents' homestead land. The Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway (now part of the CNR) was extended from Saskatoon to Prince Albert in 1890 and became the north-south axis of a Mennonite area which extended north to Rosthern from a southern limit at Warman. In 1902-03 a second axis was formed by an east-west line built through Warman, passing north of Saskatoon, and the town of Dalmeny west of Warman became a jumping off point for settlement as well. The grid road system provided for in the Dominion survey of the 1880s remained undeveloped until after the First World War, and many Mennonites declined to adopt the use of the motor car when it first appeared in any case. So the initial pattern of a self-contained block of Mennonite homesteads and communal villages radiating out from the towns along the railroads remained undisturbed until well into the 20th century.

After the First World War external cultural and economic forces began to exert more and more pressure on the Mennonite communities in

Saskatchewan. In the larger Canadian community, during the war, some hostility to pacifists and to groups who continued to use the German language had been expressed. The immigrants who had been wooed with special concessions 50 years previously were now viewed as aliens by the federal government, and in 1919 an Order-in-Council was passed barring "any immigrant of the Doukhobor, Hutterite and Mennonite class" on the grounds of "their peculiar customs, habits, modes of living and methods of holding property, and because of their probable inability to become assimilated."

In Saskatchewan the reaction took the form of making English the required language of instruction in all schools. The Department of Education began to build one-room schools in the Mennonite reserve, in some cases going so far as to name the new schools after major battles of the recent conflict, such as Paschendale. Parents who did not send their children to the new schools were fined repeatedly. This measure caused hardship to other groups as well, and was eventually rescinded in the 1970s under pressure principally from the Francophone community in the province and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Association.

At the time many Canadian Mennonites believed that their way of life was once again threatened, especially in western Canada, where, according to the Order-in-Council, the feeling against their customs was "more particularly" evident. By the mid-'20s hundreds of Mennonite families had left Saskatchewan for Mexico and Paraguay, a majority of them from the "Old Colony" villages. Leo Driedger notes that "additional migration leakages took place in the 1930s when scores of Old Colony families moved to a more isolated region at Fort Vermillion, Alberta.

In the 1950s and 1960s the drain continued to a new, more isolated northern settlement in Fort St. John, British Columbia."<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, in the period just after the First World War, Mennonites in Canada were trying to rescue co-religionists from persecution and civil disorder in Russia. MacKenzie King, prime minister of Canada at the time, and member of parliament for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, was acquainted with the Mennonite community both in Ontario and in Saskatchewan, and supported the rescue effort in spite of the 1919 Order-in-Council. Between 1923 and 1930 over 20,000 "Russlaender" Mennonites were brought to Canada; more than 1600 families were settled on the land in Saskatchewan.

The newcomers brought more change to a community already in upheaval. Not all the "Russlaenders" were farmers, nor could the land accommodate new settlers as it had before the First World War, even allowing for the exodus over the schools issue. As Frank Epp puts it, "...old Mennonite communities were strengthened, a host of new ones were founded in the five western provinces, and the whole landscape of Canadian Mennonitism was changed."

In spite of more conservative Mennonite rejection of motor vehicles, there were at least as many Model T Fords as there were horse-drawn vehicles at the Rosthern Station in July 1923 to greet the first group of refugees.<sup>19</sup> The provincial schools were there to stay, and the newcomers were eager to have their children learn English. The population was growing, but the land base wasn't, and for those who remained in Canada their children's opportunities to farm would be limited. Town life became not only attractive but necessary for many, and the growth of towns

was enhanced by the road-building program launched by the province in the '20s, and resumed with redoubled energy in the '40s and '50s after the double hiatus of the great depression and the Second World War.

The boom times of the late '60s and early '70s, partly fueled in Saskatchewan by potash developments taking place adjacent to the original Mennonite reserve, had brought further refinements in the road network and increased non-farm employment opportunities. By the mid-'70s a grid of high crown gravel roads criss-crossed the valley, paved secondary roads connected all the major villages and towns, and the old north-south axis of the railroad was now paralleled by a major highway running from the trans-Canada in the south to the far northern part of the province, beyond Lac LaRonge to the new uranium mines.

In "Mennonite country" it ran past prosperous dairy farms, their tail silos visible for miles in the very gently rolling landscape of open prairie and poplar bluffs characteristic of the parkland belt in Saskatchewan. Signs still directed the traveller off the highway along gravel roads to Neuanlage, to Blumenthal, Gruenthal, Reinland, Neuhorst -- the few remaining sites of the original Old Colony-style villages yet occupied. Leo Driedger records that many had vanished altogether, and those that remained had changed greatly. In 1976 Reinland and Neuanlage were surveying the village land preparatory to distributing it among the residents; only Gruenfeldt still held its village land in common.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the towns along the old north-south axis had remained and adapted. Warman, at just over 1,000 population, had become a "dormitory" town for people who worked in Saskatoon, and was now hoping to capitalize on its proximity to the city by marketing relatively low cost

industrial acreages. At the other end of the original block Rosthern, with over 1500 residents, was prospering as a local service centre. The village of Osler, 6 km north of Warman in the heart of the dairy country had less than 250 people in 1976 and was still simply a rural village. A few kilometres north again, Hague, with nearly 600 residents and four grain elevators to Osler's two, was a larger version of the same comfortable country town, with a few more commuters. On the east-west axis, now also served by a paved road, Dalmeny, about 18 to 20 kilometres to the north and west of both Warman and Saskatoon, was about the same size as Hague, but sufficiently close to the city to be looking seriously at the possibilities of attracting industrial development. Langham, another 16 km west, was larger than either, at nearly 800 residents, but was not yet engaged in the development game. Geography alone did not dictate whether or not rural town and village councils in the area were development-oriented. Waldheim, in the north-west corner of the original reserve, nearly 50 km due north of Saskatoon, had been merely the post office for an area settled at the turn of the century by Mennonites from the Russian Ukraine. In the mid-'70s the population was still less than 700, but the community advertised itself as a centre for world-class snow-mobiling competition, and was also surveying land for industrial development. At the southernmost extremity of the original settlement area, between Warman and Saskatoon, the phenomenon of Martensville, the instant commuter town, flourished. It too is part of the evolving Mennonite landscape in the valley, established on Mennonite farmland by families working in the city who "still wished to live in the less expensive village-like Martensville, where they had Mennonite neighbours," as Leo Driedger puts it.<sup>20</sup>

The processes of change in the valley could be traced in the Wiebe family farmhouse where most of the WDCCG meetings came to be held. John Wiebe had been raised in <sup>Greenfeldt</sup> ~~Neuhorst~~, but had been obliged to look elsewhere for land to take up farming as a young married man. In spite of his brothers' opinion, that the area south of Warman was too poor to make a "go" of, he had succeeded in creating a prosperous farm. His daughter Louise had married into a Russlaender family, and now she herself was a nurse and her husband, Jake Buhler, was the school Principal in Martensville. They were helping another daughter, Nettie, and her husband Jim Robbins, who was from outside the Mennonite community altogether, to learn about farming. Nettie was still a student and before the question of the refinery was settled would earn a Ph.D. in philosophy. Some of the new directions were clearly good, enriching the community, and the families in it. But now it seemed that the valley was being pushed in a direction that not everyone wanted to go, and the Wiebe farm and the Wiebe family were in the eye of the storm.

Painful as it was, the refinery issue was not a private matter, to be decided among a few landowners and crown corporations. Rumors were already circulating -- "they" were going to be making bombs in the neighbourhood, the landlords were being offered vast sums just for options to sell, there was going to be a big development boom, land prices would skyrocket, there would be all kinds of jobs and new people moving in -- the clumsy secrecy of SEDCO's initial approach might have been calculated to stimulate talk in an area where family networks and congregational discussion of issues were the norm.

Taking advantage of the reprieve that Jake Siemens had allowed them, Nettie Wiebe proceeded to organize what she describes as a "very home-cooked meeting." She got permission to use the Warman High School auditorium, an arrangement which depended largely on the janitor's willingness to turn out, and telephoned around the neighbourhood a bit. She and her sister Frieda spent a Saturday afternoon putting up handmade notices in the general stores of the towns and villages of the area, inviting people who were interested to turn out to discuss the issue. On the night of the meeting they cautiously set out chairs for about 30 people. But the community networks had been working overtime, and ten times that number came.

The overwhelming response astonished and nearly paralysed the organizers. With the wisdom of hindsight Nettie thinks they might have launched the WDCCG that very night, but her entire attention had been focused on getting information out to the community. Creating the mechanism to carry on a campaign that might last months, or years, had not yet entered into anybody's thinking.

She had called on the Saskatoon Environmental Society (SES) to help out with expertise on uranium issues. The SES sent three of its members -- Herman Boerma, an engineer with 13 years experience in potash mining, who became an important advisor to the group, Rob Dumont, a doctoral candidate in nuclear energy lecturing at the University of Saskatchewan who had recently received a research grant from the Atomic Energy Commission of Canada, and Peter Prebble, chairman of the "energy committee" of the SES. Prebble was to win the Saskatoon-University seat in the provincial house in the 1978 election for the NDP in a campaign in



which he opposed his party's official endorsement of the expansion of the nuclear industry in Saskatchewan.

However, Saskatchewan being a place where community organizations seem native to the soil, someone in the audience was ready with the rudiments -- a paper and pencil to take down the names of people interested in continuing to work on the issue. Emil Vanpinxteren got the traditional sheet of paper circulating; his wife Jeanne eventually became the treasurer of the WDCCG. The account of the meeting in The Saskatchewan Valley News, the Rosthern weekly that serves the area, suggests how the organization eventually came by its unwieldy name; "Close to 300 concerned residents from Warman and the surrounding district gathered in the Warman High School Tuesday evening..."<sup>22</sup>

The meeting did more than record names and express anxiety. The rumor that SEDCO was shopping for land for Eldorado Nuclear was confirmed. The local MLA, Ralph Katzman (P-C Rosthern) spoke to that effect, and observed drily that the "information being passed on to the local people by negotiators had led to some confusion regarding the purposes of the land acquisition."<sup>23</sup> He had spoken to local reporters on the issue the previous week, and Saskatoon Star-Phoenix reporters had tried to get confirmation of the story from the head office of Eldorado itself. They succeeded in obtaining a guarded acknowledgement that SEDCO was acting as Eldorado's agent from Clem Baschenis, vice-president of Eldorado in Ottawa. According to Mr. Baschenis the company's plans were still very tentative; they were looking for options, not outright purchase of land. A lot depended on future development of uranium mining in the province, he said.<sup>24</sup>

At this stage the concern in the district was the possible danger to the area itself of a uranium processing plant. Safety, and the protection of their own environment, rather than connections between the nuclear industry and the military, were the first concerns expressed. There is a hint in reports of that first meeting that what the organizers and the SES saw as information others might see as propaganda. "The speakers at Tuesday night's meeting," the Valley News commented, "did nothing to allay the fears of those attending, pointing out in no uncertain terms the possible long-range effects the wastes of such a plant, if not disposed of properly, could have on the environment and the general health of the community." "The majority of those at the meeting," the report concluded, "left with the feeling that the project presents a hazard to the community."<sup>25</sup> Some years later, when a "pro-nuclear" group was formed at the prompting of Eldorado, it was named the Warman and District Informed Citizens Group. Its very name implied that the original group were at least mistaken, at worst fear-mongering. Certainly it would have been something of a public relations victory if those supporting the construction of a refinery in the district could have persuaded the public that doubts about it could be attributed to the WDCCG rather than to any possible shortcomings in the project itself.

For the time being, however, in the summer of 1976, the discussion was contained within a small group. The issue still seemed to be whether the landowners would sell options on their land knowing the purposes of the ultimate buyer and what the dangers might be. All the energies of those already committed to opposing the refinery were directed to persuading the landowners not to sell. Whatever the landowners' convictions, and some were already planning to sell, Nettie remembers that

they made time for continued meetings on the issue, many of them taking place in the living room of the Wiebe farm house where the debate had first started. Only one of the owners lived in the city; the others were at most three miles down the road. It was a time of great strain.

"Most of them," Nettie recalls, "think of themselves as good, upright citizens, Mennonites who care. They definitely didn't want to be identified as the people who for personal gain allowed in an industry that would hurt other people."

It was certainly not clear to everyone that harm would come of it. The Saskatchewan Minister of Industry and Commerce, John Messer, had assured the local MLA Ralph Katzman that no development would proceed without proper safeguards being in place. Harmful or not, there was a general feeling that if the government wanted something to happen, and at least the two senior governments appeared to have an interest in this project, then there was very little the private citizen could do about it in the long run. In response to that fear, Nettie Wiebe's father-in-law, Wes Robbins, a minister in the provincial cabinet at the time, assured them that the provincial government would never contemplate expropriating Saskatchewan farm land for an industrial complex on behalf of a federal crown corporation in the teeth of local opposition. To override local sentiment in such a way would be politically very dangerous for any government. However, some remained unconvinced. Mennonites especially had had experience of government assurances that had not been adhered to.

There was also the marketplace. Some of the landowners were having a struggle, and had pressing financial reasons for selling options that would put some cash in hand without necessarily putting them off

their land. SEDCO had made an appeal to marketplace behaviour in defending their original concealment of the purposes of their land assembly, Nettie recalled. "That's how it's always done, apparently -- that you try and assemble the package before you give information because you want to beat the speculators to it. That was SEDCO's rationale." However, it was a situation in which the developer, having got off on the wrong foot, could do no right. "If the land was going to be an industrial park, and if the land was going to suddenly skyrocket in value, then why should the company that buys it get that break? Why not the farmers who own it? From both points of view it wasn't a sympathetic position," Nettie commented. Ironically, one of the benefits for the land owners of attendance at the meetings organized to urge them to hold off signing was that they were able to compare notes on what they were being offered. Nettie can laugh about it now. "We doubled the price for them!"

Eldorado entered the negotiations directly, and alternately pressured and courted the landowners. Men in three piece suits invited them into the city for luncheons, appealed to their business sense -- where would they get a better deal for their land? -- mentioned the energy crisis, the value to the changing community of new industry and new jobs. It was hard to resist the confidence of the developers. Jack Messer announced in some detail the sale of the land at the end of June, prematurely as it turned out. He reported that a price of between \$400 and \$500 an acre had been agreed upon, "higher than the market value, although some recent sales in the area have been as high as \$300 an acre."<sup>26</sup> The average selling price of farmland at that time in crop district 6, of which Corman Park is a part, was \$176 per acre, according to Census Canada.

In July the landowners were flown to Port Hope by Eldorado to tour the uranium refinery there. Dick Friesen, a Holstein breeder, didn't accompany the tour, but said that the owners were reassured about the safety of refinery operation. Eldorado was offering the Warman landowners much the same deal that stuck in the Port Hope area -- the company would own the land, but would lease it back to the original owners, except for approximately forty acres required for the actual plant site and compound. The remainder of the block was required only as a buffer zone, and could be leased back to its original owners.

Jake Siemens, on the other hand, was not entirely reassured by the trip east, and wanted ground water tests before any final decision on the site was made, to establish whether onsite storage of wastes might endanger wells in the area. Eldorado said no testing would be done until the land was tied up under options, and set the end of August as a deadline for negotiations with the farmers.<sup>27</sup>

Near the end of July Eldorado announced plans for the investment of millions of dollars in Saskatchewan, and the opening of a Saskatoon office as part of their expansion plans. Company vice-president Nicholas Ediger said over \$10 million would be invested in the current year, and more than \$44 million from 1976 to 1980 in mining expansion to double production at the Beaverlodge mine and mill, and \$50 million on the Warman refinery which would be processing the increased production. "Detailed planning of this chemical plant awaits economic, engineering and environmental studies now in progress," Mr. Ediger announced.<sup>28</sup> The air of inevitability attached to these announcements seemed crushing. Who could have predicted that not only would the refinery never be built, but that in 1983 Eldorado would abruptly cut production in the north, and that by

1984 Uranium City would be virtually a ghost town?

In August SEDCO hinted that there were other tracts available, other farmers more willing to sell. Eldorado went so far as to announce, in mid-August, that they had acquired options on "some privately-owned land" outside the Warman district, although they declined to say where it might be, and that they could get along without options if necessary. They might consider leasing, or fall back on crown land.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the original survey of possible sites in Saskatchewan conducted by Cambrian Engineering Group of Saskatoon in 1975 for Eldorado had started with an initial list of some fourteen possible sites, later reduced to four, and finally to the Warman site. However, Eldorado did not, at this time, refer to the Cambrian study publicly, and various versions of how many had been originally looked at and where they were circulated freely.

They repeated their position on preliminary studies in the second week of October, and the options were finally signed in mid-month. The problem of whether Eldorado should be allowed to build their refinery in Corman Park passed from the shoulders of the landowners to the community.

Eldorado's subsequent efforts to establish a "good neighbour" image in the Warman area never really overcame the initial disadvantage created by the attempt to obtain options without revealing the identity or purposes of the actual buyer. Peter Froese recalled, "you heard about the industry supposed to be starting up there -- they talked first about a shoe factory, the industrial park, the satellite city -- when the truth was finally revealed I think that people could see, hey, something awful fishy is going on."

He believes, "people started to get involved more and more" because of the "injustice" of the attempt to mislead. "I think there's something in that makes people have a gut feeling and say we have to respond to this thing, especially in smaller communities because people are all related to each other and they all talk to each other."

Corporate obsession with secrecy became an albatross which could not be shaken off. It created problems for the provincial government especially, and to some extent for the federal, as in both cases the area was represented by an opposition member very willing to embarrass the party in power. Ralph Katzman, and Ray Hnatyshyn (P-C, Saskatoon West), the federal member of parliament, continued to raise the question of the "Shrouded Refinery" as it was referred to in one newspaper editorial.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Hnatyshyn protested the "veil of secrecy" drawn over Eldorado's plans and demanded a tabling of the relevant documents in the federal house in October of 1976 and March of 1977, without success.<sup>31</sup>

There appeared to be several versions of relations between Eldorado and the provincial government current in the provincial NDP cabinet. The honourable Jack Messer told The Sheaf, the newspaper of the students' union at the University of Saskatchewan, that "discussions held between the Saskatchewan government and Eldorado Nuclear started in June of 1974." The minister was replying to an article published in July 1976 critical of the land assembly procedures and the government's role as a silent partner in a dangerous business. The minister's frankness about the history of the discussions was offset, however, by his continued use of the "industrial park" version of the land options purchases. Messer's letter, published in September of 1976, read in part:



The article notes that SEDCO attempted to purchase land options on behalf of Eldorado without informing the farmers who presently own this land as to the future uses it would be put to. This is not true. SEDCO informed the farmers that the area would be used for an industrial park. No specific clients were mentioned at that time since there were no clients defined. Eldorado had not yet made a definite commitment, and even if the Corporation had, it would have been standard procedure to not mention it. The industrial park, once established, may have a wide variety of industries locating in it, and these businesses will not be known for some time after the park has been established.<sup>32</sup>

There appears to be very little point to the minister's maintaining this version of events as late as September 1976, as two months earlier the refinery story had been made public first by Ralph Katzman, who staged a dramatic news conference on the site of the proposed refinery on July 16, 1976, and by Peter Prebble, speaking to a National Farmers' Union meeting in Regina on behalf of the SES on the following day. If Messer's version is taken at face value, it would appear that the provincial government had chosen to shop for land options in the Warman area purely as a speculative move, perhaps assuming that having the land in hand would encourage the company to make a decision in favour of developing a refining facility in the province. Such an interpretation would make the province the initiator of the scheme, rather than the corporation. However, when Ralph Katzman claimed a year later (in July of 1977) to have information that it was indeed the provincial government's invitation that precipitated the decision to choose a location near Warman, neither Elwood Cowley, the provincial secretary, nor the Eldorado spokesman approached by the Star-Phoenix, could recall whether the province had approached Eldorado or vice-versa.<sup>33</sup> Richard Kellow of the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment told the panel at the hearings that Eldorado Nuclear Limited told the DOE in May of 1975 that they were considering a



refinery in Saskatchewan.<sup>34</sup>

The honourable Elwood Cowley was not the only cabinet member to be mystified by relations between the province and the corporation. The minister of the environment, Neil Byers, seems to have been kept completely in the dark. He complained in a speech to the Qu'Appelle Valley Development Association in February of 1977 that Eldorado had not been "particularly communicative about their plans either to the provincial government or to the public."<sup>35</sup> Byers said that Eldorado had selected Warman without consulting his government, and that the province was far from sure that Warman was the best site. The deputy minister of the department, Grant Mitchell, was to have held meetings with the company officials in Ottawa the previous month to discuss the issue. "We want to see the rationale for the Warman proposal," Mitchell said. He also expected to get a detailed assessment of what Eldorado considered to be the four best locations for the proposed refinery out of the group which were originally identified in 1975, but, judging from his minister's reaction a month later, the meeting can hardly have been satisfactory.<sup>36</sup>

There may have been "commercial" reasons for not disclosing Eldorado's plans, as Minister of Energy Alistair Gillespie alleged in March 1977 in response to Ray Hnatyshyn's prodding in the federal house. However, as Anne Smart observed in her testimony at the hearings in January 1980, secrecy seems to have been a characteristic of the nuclear industry in Canada from the beginning. Ms. Smart was speaking as a member of the steering committee of Saskatoon Citizens for a Non-Nuclear Society (SCNS), an organization she helped to organize to support the WDCCG stand. She reported that the international Organization for Economic Cooperation

and Development rated Canada as one of the most secretive of Western nations where nuclear energy is concerned. "Australia, Sweden, Denmark and West Germany have carried out public information campaigns on nuclear, while Canada has released as little information as possible. This secrecy has not been imposed suddenly. It has been standard practice throughout the thirty year history of Canada's nuclear industry."<sup>37</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. For a history of the development of uranium mining in Canada up to the early '60s see Robert Bothwell's Eldorado, Canada's National Uranium Company 1926-60, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1984.
2. For a review of the boom up to 1976 see the unpublished paper "Nuclear Development in Saskatchewan" prepared by the Saskatchewan Environmental Advisory Council and presented to the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment, 1976.
3. For an analysis of the corporate structure and relationships of companies see Corporate Uranium & Saskatchewan, The Yellowcake Road, ed. Walter Davis, Saskatoon Citizens for a Non-Nuclear Society, Saskatoon [n.d.], c.1980.
4. "Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation", pamphlet published by SMDC, Regina, SK [n.d.], c.1980.
5. Ibid.
6. Saskatchewan Into the Eighties, 2nd ed., Government of Saskatchewan, Regina, SK [n.d.], c.1980, p.17.
7. Herman Boerma, speaking for the Saskatoon Environmental Society at the refinery hearings, referred extensively to the government paper. International Reporting Inc., EEAP Transcript, II, 226-7.
8. SP, 20 May 1975, "Third Page"; 2 May 1975, p.6; 2 June 1975, p.6.
9. SP, June 1975, p.6.
10. For a history of the University of Saskatchewan to 1966 see Extending the Boundaries, Scholarship and Research at the University

of Saskatchewan 1909-1966, by Carlyle King, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon [n.d.].

11. "Nuclear Development in Saskatchewan, How Far Will It Go?", in Should Uranium Stay in the Ground?, Saskatoon Environmental Society, Saskatoon [n.d.] circa 1977, p.[12].
12. Interview with Joyce Wells, former Director of Information, SED Systems, Inc., Saskatoon 1986.
13. SP, 21 Nov. 1960; 15 June 1968; 11 Mar. 1977.
15. "Community Profile," Saskatchewan Department of Tourism and Small Business, Regina [n.d.].
16. SP, "RM faces pressure for industrial land," 17 April 1979; interview with Paul Shuken, Agricultural Representative, Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, 15 March 1985. Mr. Shuken noted that the Census Canada figure for agricultural land in Crop District 6 (in which the RM appears) was \$176 per acre in 1975 (reported in 1976). Crop District 6 covers an area from Davidson north to Wakaw and from Asquith east to Dundurn.
17. Most of the following history of settlement in the area is from Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, A People's Struggle for Survival, MacMillan, Toronto, 1982. See passim Ch.4, "Immigration from Russia," and Ch.5, "Community Building: Settlements."
18. Leo Driedger, "Mennonite Change; The Old Colony Revisited, 1955-1977," Mennonite Life 32:4 (December 1977), 9.
19. Epp, Mennonites, 172.
20. Driedger, Mennonite Life, 32:4 (December 1977), 10.
21. Ibid., p.10.

22. SVN, Thursday, 24 June 1976, "Warman residents concerned over possible uranium plant location."
23. Ibid.
24. SP, 17 June 1976.
25. SVN, 24 June 1976.
26. Ibid.
27. SP, 9 July 1976.
28. SP, 27 July 1976.
29. SP, 18 Aug. 1976, "Eldorado holds options on farm land."
30. SP, 11 November 1976.
31. SP, 9 Nov. 1976, "Plant site queried"; SP, 4 Mar. 1977, "Details demanded."
32. The Sheaf, 17 September 1976.
33. SP, 6 July 1977, p.21, "Province sought nuclear refinery."
34. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, Transcripts, I, 72-3. Later he said it was the first "written" communication (Ibid., p.81). Speaking for Eldorado, Mr. Ron Dakers confirmed that the initiative came from the company (Ibid., 83).
35. SP, 2 February 1977.
36. SP, 12 January 1977.
37. Ms. Smart was quoting from "The Nuclear State: Civil Liberties Wasteland," Rights & Freedoms & Liberties (Sept./Oct.'79), 4.



### 3. CREATING THE WARMAN AND DISTRICT CONCERNED CITIZENS GROUP

While the group at Warman were temporarily defeated when the sale of the land options went through, others in the province were turning their attention to the issue. The prospect of a uranium refinery in the heart of the agricultural area of the province, and the accelerating pace of exploration and development of mining in the north, had aroused the fears of a variety of people.

Among them were the members of the SES, with whom the group in Warman had already been in contact. They led a growing public lobby which eventually pushed the provincial government into holding its own inquiry into the uranium industry in the province. Two years before the inquiry into the refinery project, which was conducted by a federal agency, FEARO (Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office) the Saskatchewan government commissioned the Cluff Lake Inquiry. Also called the Bayda Inquiry after its chairman, Regina Judge E. D. Bayda, the provincial inquiry had a dual purpose. Appointed in response to a variety of pressures, it was saddled with seemingly contradictory responsibilities -- to inquire into both a specific project, the expansion of the AMOK enterprise at Cluff Lake, and the "global" implications of the uranium industry. The double mandate strained the resources of the inquiry itself, and ultimately the credulity of the public.

Agitation for a provincial inquiry had begun well before the WDCCG organized. Shortly after the options were signed, the SES presented a petition signed by approximately 4500 persons to premier Blakeney, at a public cabinet meeting in Biggar, Saskatchewan. The petition asked for a

moratorium on nuclear development until both the provincial and federal governments conducted inquiries into the nuclear industry.

The SES had been alerted as far back as January of 1976, by a CTV news report on waste disposal problems in Port Hope, Ontario, where uranium had been refined since 1933. The Eldorado spokesman had referred in passing to plans under consideration for a refinery in Saskatchewan. Herman Boerma, Peter Prebble, Ann Coxworth, a physics graduate and homemaker in Saskatoon, and a few others from the SES met to form an ad hoc committee to investigate. They called themselves the "energy committee" of the SES, and in March of 1976 asked the provincial cabinet directly for more information on the rumors that a uranium refinery was being considered. They also recommended that a public inquiry be held into any such proposal. They got no response.

In the summer of 1976 Peter Prebble attended the Habitat Conference, and came away feeling that refineries were only part of the issue. If uranium is mined at all, then questions of whose hands are dirtied by refining or involvement in other aspects of the industry are secondary, he concluded. "Stamp out mining and you have killed the dragon." Thus by fall the SES was pressing for a much broader type of inquiry than they had envisioned in March.

The premier rejected the SES proposal for a general inquiry, but almost immediately came under intense pressure at the NDP provincial convention to reconsider. Eight constituencies presented resolutions on the "uranium issue", calling for a moratorium on development and complete investigation of the dangers of the industry.



The provincial climate of opinion had changed considerably in a few short months, but the government had been slow to take notice. In September, at a meeting between SES members and the premier, Peter Prebble recalls, Allan Blakeney professed to be surprised that uranium could be considered an "issue". The government had no special policy on uranium development, he assured Prebble, because they hadn't felt the need for one. Ann Coxworth recalls,

We pressed him further to define government policy. He said none existed. It had not been seen as a controversial issue. He admitted that there had been virtually no discussion of the refinery in cabinet or caucus, but wondered why we thought there should have been. The refinery had been seen as just another industry and he had been surprised at the reaction of SES, because we had never commented in the past on uranium mining. He saw this as inconsistent as we are now talking about having to look at the refinery as part of an overall nuclear industry. We admitted that we had only started to get into the issue when the refinery threatened to happen on our doorstep...<sup>1</sup>

In fact the government did have a policy, of course, as the premier made clear in January when commenting on the proposed inquiry at the university in Saskatoon. It was simply a pro-development policy. When asked at the university whether the province should impose a moratorium on uranium development until hearings were completed, Blakeney's response was that the province's uranium policy had been in effect for 20 years, and it was only recently that the issue had been raised as a public concern. To change it now would be to prejudge the outcome of an inquiry.<sup>2</sup>

The change in climate had been due in no small part to the work of the SES since the March meeting. They had embarked on a systematic campaign to organize the anti-nuclear "constituency", speaking to church groups and community organizations wherever they could get an audience, and putting out literature on the nuclear industry. Now some of that hard

work was paying off in the form of direct pressure on the government from within the NDP.

Resolutions passed at the annual convention are traditionally regarded as policy directives for the government caucus within the Saskatchewan NDP. The government was thus faced with the very real prospect of either having their development plans jeopardized by a very restrictive resolution, or finding themselves in opposition to a large and vocal constituency within the party. The debate over the uranium resolution lasted three hours before an acceptable compromise was passed. Jack Messer, newly sworn in as minister of mineral resources, moved an amendment, which was eventually accepted, calling for an inquiry rather than a provincial royal commission. In the process he accepted a very broad scope for the proposed inquiry -- it was to cover the implications of uranium mining, refining and processing in the province. The recommendation for a moratorium was dropped, although the resolution did call for "no new commitments" until the results of an inquiry were available. It did include the "international context" in the scope of the proposed inquiry.

By early December the minister was redefining the mandate the convention had handed the government. Public inquiries into nuclear development in Saskatchewan would be conducted on a project-by-project basis, and would not take the form of a general overall investigation into nuclear development in the province, he announced. The minister's interpretation of the intent of the convention recommendation meant that he saw no need to impose a general restriction on uranium development while one project was being inquired into, and the results of inquiry into one project need not restrict other projects. Having thus proposed a

multiplicity of narrowly-based inquiries rather than a single all-encompassing examination of the industry, the minister nevertheless affirmed that the "global implications" of the province's involvement in the nuclear industry would be examined in conjunction with each project inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Thus, on December 24 the minister of the environment, Neil Byers, announced that a public inquiry would be held into both the local impacts of uranium development and its broader national and international implications. It was to be the first such inquiry held in North America, and "a very nice Christmas present" according to Peter Prebble. Once again there seemed to be some confusion as to intent. The premier's version of the scope of the inquiry seemed to differ somewhat from Jack Messer's, as he assured students at the university in Saskatoon early in January that the inquiry would include all aspects of uranium development and refining, including the global point of view. However, the differences were more apparent than real. The inquiry that was announced was the Bayda inquiry into the Amok proposal. The extended scope of the inquiry was secondary to the examination of the project. This division of purposes, which had first become apparent during the debate at the NDP convention, seriously undermined the credibility of the inquiry which was eventually held.<sup>4</sup>

In February Byers announced the appointment of a three-member board of inquiry, to be headed by Justice E. D. Bayda of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeals. Dr. Kenneth McCallum, a chemist at the University of Saskatchewan and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research there, and Dr. Agnes Groome of the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina were the other two members. The panel were instructed to recommend

whether the Cluff Lake project should be allowed to proceed as planned, should not be built, or should go ahead subject to conditions. They were also instructed to inquire into the international implications of the uranium industry for the province.

Between the minister's announcement in February and the premier's assurances of a general investigation in January the Company most concerned with the issue, Amok Ltee, made its own statements on the issue and aroused a new set of anxieties and pressures. They had already invested \$30 million in preparation for their mining venture, and were now faced with the prospect of an indefinite, possibly permanent, delay while an inquiry was conducted. They had been promised temporary permits to proceed by the provincial government, but the permits had to come from the AECB, not Regina, and by January of 1977 had not been made available. The managing director announced that the company would not proceed with the winter work program planned to prepare the site for mining until the permits were in hand. This in turn precipitated a reaction from pro-development northerners, notably from the Mayor of Uranium City, Larry Fiss. Fiss appealed to Byers to appoint someone from Uranium City to sit on the inquiry board to present the northern point of view. "The town people view the inquiry as southern Saskatchewan telling the North what's good for it," he said. Northern contractors who had been counting on the Amok business were facing a very hard winter indeed if the company halted activities at Cluff Lake. Eventually the temporary permits were released and work did proceed, but the public exchange made it clear that the government was hostage to more than one set of pressures. The fact that development work proceeded while the inquiry was in process was also embarrassing to the inquiry itself.<sup>5</sup>

In the fall of 1976 the "concerned citizens" in the Warman area were groping for a new direction. The sale of the options on the land seemed a crushing defeat. The provincial government assurances that hearings would be held before any refinery was built were still only a vague promise for the future. Nevertheless the strong urge to do something was there, and gradually a working committee emerged and a formal organization was created.

Part of the stimulation to organize continued to come from the larger Mennonite church. Harold Regier of the Peace and Social Justice office for the Home Ministries Commission of the Mennonite Conference in Newton, Kansas, was exploring means of reevaluating the nuclear issue within the church. The last general statement had appeared in 1959. Regier wrote to Ernie Hildebrand that they were hoping to convene a gathering of scientists and physicists to update the statement, and "to prepare some materials for study and discussions that would be helpful to congregations such as yours dealing with the kind of issues you're confronted with. Certainly the whole question of building nuclear power plants in areas where Mennonites are living is something that we ought to be concerned about and find some ways to address."<sup>6</sup> Bill Janzen, director of the Ottawa office of the Mennonite Central Committee in Canada had followed the events in Warman from the time of Jake Buhler's and Jim Robbins' first letter to the newspapers, which had also been released from the MCC Winnipeg office. Lydia Penner of the Information Services in the Winnipeg office wanted a "follow-up", having heard that the farmers had decided to sell options on their land. "We need to find ways of airing the issue [nuclear energy] so that its implications can be discussed and a

Christian response formulated," she wrote to Jake in November of 1976.<sup>7</sup>

In October Bill Janzen, who had grown up in the community, met with a small group in the basement of the Osler Mennonite Church. Bill was knowledgeable about organizing and concerned about the uranium issue, and, as Ernie Hildebrand remembers, "Helped to give us a little bit of focus." About 25 people met, including Dick Friesen and Jake Siemens, who were among the farmers who had sold options on their land to Eldorado. The group's attention was still on the process of land acquisition as the avenue by which Eldorado was entering their community. Thus their immediate concern was to sort out the tangle of planning and zoning powers held by the province and the RM, to discover what their powers of obstruction or prevention might be. They decided to do some "community education" as Janzen described it, "especially in relation to a referendum on whether the Municipality should rezone that area so that industrial development can take place."<sup>8</sup>

Ernie was very anxious "to get something going" and he and Jake Buhler and Jeanne Vanpinxteren volunteered to be an ad hoc organizing committee. By the time they were ready to "go public" the government had announced The Bayda inquiry, and their plans took a new direction. Jake called a larger group together in his home for a planning meeting in February of 1977, and they began to make plans simultaneously for participation in the inquiry and the creation of an organization. The ad hoc group met one more time, in March of 1977, in Martensville. Ernie was delegated to investigate participation in the Cluff Lake Inquiry, and Jeanne and Jake undertook to organize a public meeting to launch the group.

Ernie attended the preliminary hearings of the Cluff Lake Inquiry Board in Regina in March. His main concern was to urge an extension in the Inquiry Board's deadline. The Board had less than a year, not much more than six months, until the November first deadline they had been given by the minister of the environment. By that time they were to have considered not only the pros and cons of the mining development at Cluff Lake, but the "broader implications" of expanding the uranium industry, for the province and the international community, hold hearings throughout Saskatchewan, and prepare a report. Apart from the size and complexity of the task, such haste seemed inappropriate in dealing with so serious an issue. In this connection, the moratorium proposal refused to die. The Osler church of which Ernie was pastor had called for a moratorium on uranium development until the issues could be properly debated, at their annual meeting in January of 1977. The following month the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan passed a similar resolution calling for a five-year moratorium as did Mennonite Central Committee, Saskatchewan, in November. Popular opinion seemed to be in favour of holding off. As Jake Buhler put it at the Warman hearing of the inquiry itself, "Why the rush? Why the quick report to the government? Surely with uranium having been there for tens of thousands of years we can allow just a little more time to study the whole thing a little more carefully."<sup>9</sup>

The launching of the WDCCG was a modest affair. Although membership was eventually to approach ~~900~~, attendance at the first organizational meeting fell far short even of the 300 who turned out in June of 1976 in the first flush of anxiety about the uranium refinery rumors. About 35 people came to a meeting on April 19, 1977, at the Warman

*no, the correct number was 500*  
*Jake Buhler*



Town Hall to either witness or participate in the establishment of the Concerned Citizens Group.

Ernie Hildebrand was elected chairman of the new executive; his colleagues were Jake Buhler, Jeanne Vanpinxteren, Edgar Epp, Ray Kaufhold and Sam Rempel. The WDCCG started out in life with two principal aims, first to educate themselves about the uranium industry, and second to inform their membership and community about it. Out of the second purpose came what amounted to a third, and eventually overriding aim, to voice their concerns about the industry.

The meeting had a number of visitors who had a keen interest in the future activities of the new organization. The French uranium mining consortium Amok, sent a representative. George Guenther, then mayor of the town of Warman, who was later to be active in establishing a pro-refinery group known as the Warman and District Informed Citizens, was there, as was Gordon Burton, the Saskatoon-based public relations man for Eldorado Mines. The Saskatchewan Coalition Against Nuclear Development (SCAND) sent Larry Fillo to urge the infant Warman organization to attend a rally planned for June in Saskatoon.

George Guenther was ready to have a "bearpit" session right then and there, and thrash out the nuclear question once and for all in head-on debate. However, confrontation was not the WDCCG style, although there was no question, then or later, but that Mayor Guenther wanted a confrontation. Three days after the WDCCG organizational meeting he announced that Warman Town Council had passed a resolution declaring its support for the development of a nuclear refinery near the town, provided



that the Bayda inquiry board gave it a "favourable recommendation". Bayda was later to decline any responsibility for making a recommendation for or against a refinery, but Guenther, like many others, was led to assume that the broad terms apparently granted the inquiry included consideration of the Warman proposal. His announcement caught Corman Park Reeve Victor Sommerfeld, in whose municipality the land in question was, by surprise. He thought the announcement was "premature" but nevertheless took the opportunity to make his own statement in favour of the project.<sup>10</sup> It was not the last time that the WDCCG were to find themselves at odds with the local councils.

Before the end of the month they had their first public appearance as a formal organization, with the SES, at a meeting with Dr. Fred Knelman of Concordia University, at the Osler High School. They had their membership cards ready, and signed up 40 people on the spot. In less than three weeks their own people were in the limelight, in a public information program organized at the Waldheim High School on May 9. Advertised as a "seminar on the issues", the program included Ernie Hildebrand, Gordon Burton, Christine Smillie from the SES and Bob Fink from SCAND. Ms. Smillie remembers Ernie's talk on "stewardship", one of the first issues to be raised in connection with the proposed expansion of the nuclear industry into the Valley, as "very mild and non-confrontational." Her husband, Peter Prebble, remembered also that "by 1980 Ernie was a much stronger speaker" on the subject, a product of what was to be a testing experience with the Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry, and of convictions deepened by study.

The meeting at the Waldheim school also gave the WDCCG an early warning of the impossibility of controlling the atmosphere in meetings which included participants from many different groups. The Valley News reported that "feelings of disbelief and antagonism" with regard to Eldorado's position were vigorously expressed. The company's representative, Gordon Burton, found himself lumbered with the reputation for concealment acquired at the beginning of the land transactions, and the target of hostilities which were the product of fears about the industry as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

The newsletter which was sent out to the membership shortly after the Waldheim experience sounded what was to be a characteristically cautious note about participating in meetings organized by other groups. The letter was a follow-up to Larry Fillo's request for help with the June rally in Saskatoon. The comment on attendance was remarkably neutral, hardly a call to arms: "Since some of our concerns are identical ... we should encourage our members to attend the rally if they wish to do so."

SCAND had originally been conceived as an umbrella organization, to coordinate the activities of the various groups working on the uranium issue. However, the wide variety of provincial groups proved difficult to bring under one umbrella, and SCAND was most successful as a small "ginger" group organizing mass education events and popularizing information on the nuclear industry. They were the first group to adopt as their specific purpose opposing the industry, and in this respect were considerably more "militant" than were the WDCCG which, initially at any rate, adopted a public stance of questioning rather than opposing the development of the industry.

Whatever their doubts about style and strategy, the WDCCG was happy to report that "we are not alone". The Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC), made up of church groups and international development agencies, had identified 23 groups in the province who were actively working on concerns to do with nuclear technology. They were putting together a "Nuclear Memo" to identify the various groups and to help keep them up to date in one another's activities and resources. The WDCCG's own newsletter to its newly constituted membership clearly welcomed the sense of being involved in a broader community of purpose that the evolving network of concerned organizations afforded. They also welcomed the recognition of the breadth of the issues before them that the "Nuclear Memo" put forward: "The concerns before us are in the community, province, and the world."<sup>12</sup> They continued to keep in touch with the provincial "network" and were in turn supported by it in their own final confrontation with the refinery inquiry panel.

The fledgling organization now found itself active on several fronts. Representations to Regina had resulted in their being "designated" by the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment to receive a grant to assist them to participate in the Cluff Lake Inquiry. Jim Robbins was asked to prepare a brief, to be ready by the end of September to present to the panel. In the meantime it was becoming obvious that a majority of the town and hamlet councils in the area, as well as that of the all-important RM of Corman Park, were "development-minded", and were unlikely to expose their plans to the scrutiny and comment of the WDCCG. Wise in the ways of government, Edgar Epp recommended they begin to monitor that front, and was promptly delegated to arrange for subscriptions to the Saskatchewan Gazette,

and the minutes of the RM Council, to ensure of an early warning of any moves to rezone the land under option to Eldorado.

June found the WDCCG once more sponsoring a public education meeting, this time with the Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry. The newsletter to members promised "a good debate" and urged everyone to come prepared to ask questions, and to encourage friends and neighbours to come as well. However, the executive clearly did not want members to see the meeting as an opportunity to attack or even confront the "pro-nuclear" forces; the meeting was billed as "a good opportunity to make our concerns felt and to become better acquainted with the issues."<sup>13</sup>

One hundred people came to the "Town Hall" meeting in Warman to hear Dr. Henry Caplan and Huntley Schaller put forward the "pro" and "con" views, respectively, of uranium development. Huntley Schaller was representing the SES. Caplan had more faith than Schaller in the powers of technologists and scientists to find solutions to waste disposal and pollution problems, and was more inclined to turn to new energy sources rather than conservation to forestall future energy shortages. Both agreed that a simple ban on the export of Canadian uranium in any form was the most direct way to allow Canadians to enjoy the benefits that might be derived from the nuclear industry without contributing to the proliferation of nuclear weaponry. This was perhaps the only time such a moderate compromise position was publicly discussed. In view of the fact that renewed uranium "boom" of the '70s was based almost entirely on export expectations, it is perhaps not surprising that the industry showed no interest in this position, and that most people in the audience found it hard to believe that any government would adopt such a policy. In any

case, the refinery would have produced uranium hexafluoride, not used in any Canadian generating stations, and so intended solely for export.

Local reaction to the SCAND rally held in early June made it clear that the WDCCG had been right to be cautious about counting on local interest in organized protests. The gathering in front of City Hall in Saskatoon on Saturday, June 4, attracted 500 protesters who listened to two hours of anti-nuclear speeches. The following day 125 people attended a picnic and symbolic tree-planting ceremony on the land set aside for the refinery. In the meantime, residents of Warman attended a local baseball game, or tended their gardens, and declined to take any interest in what they regarded as a city manifestation.

"Why didn't they hold the march here?" one Warman resident asked. Rod Cousineau, a local electrical contractor, had the same reaction. "We're not a satellite of Saskatoon yet." As the proposed refinery site was near Warman, many local people felt holding protests in Saskatoon was inappropriate, in spite of the organizers' argument that the head offices of Eldorado and Amok were in the city. However, it was also true that opinion in the town of Warman itself was still up in the air. Some were indifferent, some felt helpless to analyze the complexities of nuclear energy and believed that the public could only rely on the experts. Cousineau thought that many were actually in favour of the proposed scheme.<sup>14</sup>

By August Jim Robbins' brief was ready and the question of how to approach the Cluff Lake Inquiry was now urgently requiring a decision. Ernie Hildebrand had found, attending the preliminary hearings of the Inquiry in Regina, that Judge Bayda intended to conduct a two-stage inquiry -- a formal inquiry, with some of the atmosphere of the courtroom,

and informal local hearings to gather statements of community opinion. The inquiry board had, in fact, fairly extensive legal powers, as it was established by an order-in-council of the provincial government, rather than under the somewhat less extensive investigative powers of the provincial Environment Act which was the more usual route for such inquiries. The Board intended to call witnesses before it, to testify under oath in their areas of expertise, and to be cross-examined by the Inquiry's legal counsel and by representatives of whatever groups were prepared to undertake full-time participation in the inquiry process. A number of groups, including the SES, did decide to participate, and, as Peter Prebble, who acted for the SES, put it, got a "liberal education" on the workings of the uranium industry in Canada and abroad.

All of the formal hearings, which were to be in five phases, beginning with an overview of the industry in Canada, covering various technical aspects of the Amok proposals for the Cluff Lake development and ending with consideration of the international implications of the uranium industry, were to be conducted in Regina. Judge Bayda made it clear in the beginning that the burden of proof would be on the outside participants, or "intervenors" as they were called, rather than on the witnesses from the industry. Amok did not have to prove that their procedures were safe; the opponents of the development, or the doubters, had to prove that they were dangerous. The judge's thinking may have been influenced by an analogy with the principle of common law that holds the "accused" innocent until proven guilty. Whether or not it was appropriate to apply that principle to an examination of the nuclear industry, Ernie Hildebrand felt that the WDCCG did not have the expertise or the resources to support an intervention of this kind. However, that decision did not mean the group intended to

take a passive role. Jim Robbins' brief was accepted unanimously by a membership meeting in August, and it was decided to present the brief at a local hearing, and during phase 5 of the formal hearings.

From then until the Board actually sat in Warman on October 17 the WDCCG lobbied with the panel to hold a hearing in their area. However, within a month of the August meeting they were showing signs of disillusionment with the inquiry process, at least as conceived by the Bayda Commission. On September 23 they circulated a news release which expressed their doubts about the conduct of the inquiry. "Is the Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry really the open inquiry that was promised by the provincial government last spring?" they asked.

The trouble originated with the divided purposes of the inquiry itself, and its tight time frame. The WDCCG plan to present the brief at the phase 5 (international) sessions of the formal hearings had been frustrated by the inquiry's already too-tight schedule. An attempt of the SES to introduce the topic of the refinery proposed for Warman in their brief was ruled out of order by Judge Bayda. While the inquiry's terms of reference instructed it to look at the broader implications of uranium mining in Saskatchewan, which the judge agreed could include refining the product from the mines, it precluded considering the pros and cons of a specific refinery project proposal, again according to the chairman's interpretation. The ruling appeared to leave the possibility of early public examination of the Eldorado proposal in limbo, and the efforts of the Warman group along with it. They asked:



Where does that leave the Warman group? They have received a \$1600.00 grant from the Cluff Lake Inquiry Financial Assistance Program to prepare and present a brief on the basis of the group's aims and objectives. Their aims and objectives are '...to speak to our concerns in the uranium developments in Saskatchewan and specifically as related to the proposed uranium refinery in the Warman area'. These concerns will receive no hearing at the formal stages of the board, and the possibility still exists that the brief will be ruled out of order at the local hearings if Judge Bayda follows his judgement consistent with the formal hearings.<sup>15</sup>

What effect could local hearings held in October have on a decision scheduled to be announced at the beginning of November, they wondered. Was the Bayda Commission acting under instructions to disallow specific discussion of the Eldorado proposal? If that were so, they speculated, where might such instructions have come from?

They were not alone in their questioning. Earlier in the year a number of organizations, and churches connected with the Inter-Church Energy Committee, had declared publicly their refusal to participate in the inquiry. SCAND had dramatically burned a facsimile of their cheque from the Environment Department's fund to support participation in the inquiry. Their doubts were partly founded on the feeling that the very tight schedule made it inevitable that the inquiry would be a rush job, and partly on the observable fact that the provincial government was continuing to actively support uranium exploration and development in the north while the inquiry was going on. SMDC planned to spend almost \$20 million in the 1977-78 budget on exploration alone. It appeared that Jack Messer's December 1976 statement that development would be considered on a project by project basis was a more reliable guide to the actual purpose of the inquiry than the premier's later assertion that it would consider all aspects of the industry.



Nevertheless, the WDCCG, now approaching 100 members, determined to participate as fully as possible in the local sitting of the Cluff Lake Board. They circulated the WDCCG brief that Jim Robbins had prepared, and a copy of a tabloid on the history of the uranium industry in Saskatchewan prepared by the SES, to the membership and urged them to come out and be heard. The list of "things to keep in mind" about the hearing process provided in the newsletter might have served as a warning to the later inquiry about what participation meant to these people.

1. Be sure to attend and invite friends and neighbours to come as well. This is our opportunity to voice our concern.
2. Bring your children as well. Judge Bayda has stated that he hopes people will come as families.
3. Anyone who wants to say something, may. The meeting will last until everyone has been heard. Even though we have prepared a formal brief as a group, this should in no way prevent any individual member from speaking on his or her own behalf.
4. A written report of what you intend to say may accompany your presentation but is not absolutely necessary.
5. A German interpreter will be present for people who would rather use this language.
6. If someone has already stated your concern, don't let that stop you from repeating it. If we all make the same statement, it carries more weight than if just one person states it.
7. If you cannot be there at 7:00 -- come when you are able to.<sup>16</sup>

That the later effort to organize public participation was a stunning success was partly due to the lessons learned in Warman in October of 1977. It was a disheartening experience. The first thing they learned was that a general call to the membership was not enough to bring people out. Only a handful came, the small executive group, a few

others of the local people, and a couple of SCAND members. Fewer still were prepared to speak. They were unprepared in two ways. Some were simply there to witness the proceedings, and had no thought of making a public statement, however "informal" the proceedings were intended to be. Others were prepared to speak, but were flustered and silenced by questioning from the inquiry board members, and a feeling of being out of their depth.

The exchange over Sam Rempel's plea for a referendum on the refinery issue was a case in point. An active member of the executive, Mr. Rempel had come prepared to state his view; he was less prepared for the expectation that he defend and explain it. Nick Patkau had raised the point that local people were not well informed on the uranium issue, and had not come forward with their opinions partly because many would not, or could not, spare the time for the exhaustive examination being conducted by the inquiry. Judge Bayda asked what he thought should be done, and Sam Rempel responded, "Hold a referendum." The judge then wanted to know how a referendum would solve the public information problem. Sam Rempel replied:

Well, I would suggest you have an educational program that is long enough to educate all the people that are eligible to vote, then have a referendum on the matter to see whether the people want it or not, because I don't think Eldorado or the Government should go against the wishes of the people.

In response to questioning from the judge, Rempel explained that he was proposing a referendum to cover the whole question of "whether they want uranium to expand or not." The judge suggested that if the referendum were worded to include the various conditions under which expansion of the industry might be acceptable to some people, "You would end up with a

referendum that consisted of 10,000 pages." The judge assured Sam that he was "putting it to you for the sake of discussion. Maybe it's something we should consider, a referendum." Sam defended his proposition on the ground that "that's the only way you're going to get everybody involved." The judge was less sympathetic to this remark, and the following dialogue ensued:

The Chairman: Can they write?

Sam Rempel: Well, if they can make an "X" whether they want it or not, that's all that's required.

The Chairman: Some people who have written to us say we don't want to voice our views orally; we'll write to you. And they have written to us; they have filed written briefs.

Sam Rempel: Okay, what percentage of the population does that include? There's still a lot of people that will never voice an opinion but they're still against it. They won't speak out and the only chance they have is if they have a vote on it.

The Chairman: Will they vote?

Sam Rempel: Well...

Dr. Groome: What was your name?

Sam Rempel: Sam Rempel.

The Chairman: Will they vote?

Sam Rempel: Well, if the issue is important enough. I would imagine they would vote; I'm rather sure they would.

The Chairman: Well, if the issue was that important why aren't they voicing their opinions? Why aren't they here? Why aren't they writing?

Sam Rempel: Well, like I say, maybe they don't know enough about it. Maybe they seem to think that it's not dangerous or whatever. You know, a lot of people haven't got time.

Nick Patkau: I think mostly they think they don't know enough to say anything.

Sam Rempel: That's right.<sup>17</sup>

At this point Nettie Wiebe protested, "We thought we came to be heard and now we're being questioned and pushed."

The chairman was immediately apologetic and defended his practice as "a testing of opinion." The notion that it might be intimidating hit him with "something of a thunderbolt." It is perhaps a moot point whether questions like "Can they write?", or, "Well, if the issue was that important ... why aren't they here?" can readily be seen to be intended merely to test opinion. The intent may well have been to elicit an explanation of how participation might be improved, but the style lent a more aggressive tone to the questioning than was perhaps intended.

Both style and practice reflected an approach to settling questions quite foreign to local community practice. The Cluff Lake Inquiry's procedures were derived directly from the court room analogue described by the chairman himself:

...it seems to me that the one side is able to bring out quite well all the facts in favor of that side. The other side is able to do the same; they're able to bring experts from all over the world, scientists ... and line up a group of scientists on one side, a group of scientists on the other side. They can debate these topics back and forth. All the facts just rise to the surface and there they are. Then someone has got to make the decision. It's very much like a court case. You've got the plaintiff's case and the defendant's case and they're equally -- they're vehemently in favour of their own respective views. Someone has got to make the decision. The judge sits there and makes a decision. Sometimes he's right and sometimes he's wrong. We hope to think that he's usually right.<sup>18</sup>

This approach to examining an issue is essentially adversarial, and stand or falls by the validity of the assumption that every knotty problem facing a community or a group of people can be reduced to two opposing "sides" or views. The process of arriving at the truth, then,

is concomitantly reduced to a process of choosing a side. But truth, as Ernie Hildebrand observed at the same sitting of the inquiry, is evasive. We can only hope that it will "win out" and "be discovered" before, and not after decisions have been made.<sup>19</sup>

Local practice tended to be based on the congregational model, a continuous examination and sifting of points of view and relevant scripture until a consensus was reached. While voting might be resorted to, if a formulation clear enough to vote for or against emerged, the process was more akin to a seminar discussion than to a debate. This concern for a more holistic view was expressed by Frieda Wiebe, who asked the Cluff Lake panel, "Will your conclusion in any way reflect -- it should, I suppose -- reflect the opinion of the people and in that case be a sort of referendum on the opinions that you have taken in the province?" She phrased her concern in various ways, asking whether the report of the inquiry would be "the collective opinion of the hearings," "a consolidation of the major points of view," or a reflection of "the opinions of the people at large."<sup>20</sup>

The support expressed by other members of the audience at the hearing for Sam Rempel's referendum proposal was also founded on the concern that the broadest possible canvass and pooling of opinion be undertaken in preparation for a decision. An approach to problem solving based on the notion that all of those concerned should contribute to and take responsibility for the solution gives rise to a very different style of presentation from that demanded by even the "informal" hearings of the inquiry. Hence the confrontational mode of questioning that was part of the adversarial courtroom analogue followed by the Cluff Lake Inquiry was

baffling as well as intimidating. People were at a loss how to respond as much as they were puzzled as to what to say.

The feeling of being out of their depth was also a factor in restraining the expression of opinion. People were very much aware of the long process of examining expert witnesses that the board had been conducting since April of 1977, and they were reminded of it in the chairman's introduction to the sitting. "We held 65 days of Formal Hearings and heard 140 expert witnesses," Judge Bayda told them.<sup>21</sup> However, the judge also observed, "The expert is not here to decide things for us. He is here to help us decide." The "decision-maker", according to the judge, should be "the ordinary person, people like yourselves, people like this Board."<sup>22</sup> In spite of these assurances, it appeared to Murray Doell that "the educated people are controlling the whole meeting," and that "the ordinary people are scared to speak because educated talk dominates this meeting."<sup>23</sup> This diffidence was shared in some part by most local members of the audience. Nettie Wiebe expressed what was to be their defence against the sense of being overwhelmed by science, and of their belief that the fact that refinery proposal was wrong for their community must be articulated in spite of that:

...we're not experts but most of these people have lived here a long time, myself included. We are experts in one thing, and that is in living here, which no other -- no outsider -- is an expert in. So that seems to me to give us basis to make some decisions.<sup>24</sup>

Her remarks were made in response to a suggestion of Judge Bayda's that an independent board, served by inquiry counsel, which brought in "independent experts" to "test the views of those experts who feel that the mine, or in this case the refinery, should go ahead" could be the answer

to the community's fears that the tendency of the nuclear industry to secrecy made it difficult to be sure that they were hearing the whole of the evidence about the industry. In other words, a commission of inquiry very much like the one they were participating in might be the means to provide a reliable "verdict".

Leonard Boldt, a local farmer, expressed another aspect of the group's concern with the inquiry process, the feeling prevalent in the community that the decision was already made. "I think that is perhaps one of the biggest reasons that this hall is not full today ... We have to convince them that it does help to write letters or make phone calls and it does help to voice your opinion as an individual."<sup>25</sup>

It seemed as though everything the group learned about public inquiries was negative. However, the effort to meet the demands of the inquiry process had stimulated their own organization to set up a formal structure, to articulate their concerns about the possible intrusion of the nuclear industry into their area, and to take the first steps toward developing the research and lobbying skills that were to serve them so well in the final confrontation over the refinery proposal.

The brief that Jim Robbins presented to the Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry on behalf of the WDCCG indicated where the group had arrived in their grappling with the problem before them. To begin with, they had moved from a neutral, if doubting, position on expansion of the industry to firm opposition in their public statements. According to Robbins, "When the group was first formed it took no firm stance for or against the plant or for or against nuclear energy but merely wished to inform

itself further on the issue. Since that time I think our views have become anti-nuclear."<sup>26</sup>

Their introduction to the nuclear industry in the summer of 1976, a tale of misdirection and misinformation, had made them cautious, he recounted, and gave rise to a series of questions that they felt should be answered before any go-ahead was given to developments in their area.

Who polices the industry, they wondered. Their own research had led them to the Law Reform Commission of Canada's review of the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB), which concluded that the Board did not have "an appropriate degree of independence from activities that it regulates." Provincially, the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment did not seem to be as well informed about decisions being made in the industry as was the Department of Trade and Commerce. What about the risk of pollution of their water supply? The evidence they had so far turned up, provided by a former Saskatchewan Research Council hydrologist, Dr. S. H. Whitaker, described the Warman site as one of the worst available in the province from the point of view of vulnerability to pollution carried in rain and meltwater. They estimated there were 50 dairy farms within a ten-mile radius of the refinery site, as well as beef, hog, chicken and sheep operations. Moreover, would those living near the plant be exposed to a radiation hazard? Eldorado was assuring people that material handled at the refinery would be low in radioactivity, but any extra radiation, however low, represented an increase in exposure and therefore an increased risk. Suppose damage were sustained in the area due to plant operations. What kind of compensation could people hope to receive? Were the sweeping assurances of economic benefits to the local area from



the development really likely to materialize? No construction firms or tradesmen in the province, let alone the Warman area, were qualified or accredited to work on a nuclear project. The food and beverage trade might benefit from a temporary influx of outside workers, but would the supposed benefits to the local economy really offset the liabilities, both actual and potential? Where would the product of a new refinery (there were then five in the western world) eventually end up? There appeared to be no reliable safeguards to prevent its ending up in a modified form in the weapons industry. Not only would the waste from the use of the refined uranium be highly radioactive, but any further processing of it would produce plutonium, the base material for nuclear bombs. Finally, they wondered what voice the local people would have in the decision regarding the Warman refinery. The present inquiry had been presented to them by various groups, including the provincial government and Eldorado, as a means by which the public could be involved in decision-making. However, as it had turned out, the Warman proposal was a minor concern for it. Public hearings on site proposals such as those conducted on the Lepreau nuclear power station in New Brunswick didn't seem to offer much either. The NB hearing lasted one day, and published no report before approving construction.

In spite of their doubts about the usefulness of the Cluff Lake Inquiry in their own dilemma, on balance they felt it provided a good model, and were prepared to recommend that an inquiry into the Warman refinery proposal be conducted along the same lines, provided that funding were made available "to commission expert criticism of Environmental Impact Statements prepared for nuclear proposals." They believed that the questions they raised about the nuclear industry were serious enough to

warrant calling a halt to any expansion in Saskatchewan "until the industry has demonstrated that the problems of nuclear proliferation, high level waste disposal, and fuel reprocessing have been solved." They also recommended that as the secrecy surrounding the dealings of the industry excluded the public from decision making," some means of penetrating that secrecy, such as provincial freedom of information laws, be established.<sup>27</sup>

The WDCCG came away from their experience with some major problems to mull over. One was the difficulty of making local concerns felt in an arena where technical, scientific and economic data appeared to carry most weight. Another was persuading local people to turn out to voice their concerns. For those who came there was another problem. How did they preserve the atmosphere of calm collective examination of the issues preferred in their community, and avoid the confrontations between examiners and deponents encouraged by the adversarial relationships established by the inquiry process?

The meeting at Warman of the Cluff Lake Board had been painfully unsuccessful in that respect, so much so that Dr. Agnes Groome had been moved to say:

---the Board came here sincerely hoping that we would be getting the views of the people about uranium. I don't think that we came expecting that we would have to defend our honour, that we would be challenged in every respect.<sup>28</sup>

One of the challenges that had led to a particularly sharp exchange had come from Judy Gayton, representing the lively SCAND group. She tried to get the panel to either explain or defend the funding restrictions which had led her organization to refuse their participation grant rather than accept a limitation which vetoed their using it for public grounds that the grants came from a separate agency (the Department

of the Environment) and not from the inquiry board itself. Gayton protested that "I answered your question and it's only fair for -- if we're really being candid with one another -- for you to answer our questions as well." The judge's response was snappish, "You have completely misconceived the purpose of this meeting."<sup>29</sup>

However, the friction was not all imported by any means. Dr. Groome had precipitated some of it herself by appearing to denigrate local opinion. Ralph Katzman had asked whether a referendum on the refinery issue in the area (or in Corman Park) would be binding on the government, and Dr. Groome had answered obliquely, and perhaps unwisely, with a personal view. "I have problems with the idea," she said, "because of the fickleness of local opinion." Katzman interrupted at this point to warn her, "You're opening a ball game," but Dr. Groome was prepared to repeat her statement with virtually no modification, "Well, problems because of the fickleness of opinion. And I didn't say belief! I said opinion."<sup>30</sup> That, in Nettie Wiebe's view, was "a great insult." "If you're sure your opinion is being discounted as fickle," she burst out, "who needs to speak?" Clearly a hostile atmosphere was going to be of no help, in presenting the local case, and was not one that local people could be comfortable with. The stunning success of the later effort to organize public participation was partly due to the lessons learned in Warman in October of 1977.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Saskatoon Environmental Society. Notes on a meeting between members of the Energy Committee and Premier Blakeney, Thursday, September 16, 1976, at the Bessborough Hotel. Ann Coxworth.
2. SP, 13 January 1977, "Provincial uranium study to have wide scope ... Blakeney speaks at U. of S."
3. SP, 13 November 1976, "Messer rules out general nuclear study."
4. SP, 13 January 1977 (as in #25).
5. SP, 28 January 1977, p.5, "Uranium City seeks role in inquiry."
6. Harold R. Regier, Secretary, Peace & Social Concerns Home Ministries, General Conference Mennonite Church, to Ernie Hildebrand, Pastor, Osler Mennonite Church, 12 January 1977.
7. Lydia Penner, Information Services, Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), Winnipeg, to Jake Buhler, Principal, Martensville [sic] School, 25 November 1976.
8. William Janzen to Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn, 25 November 1976.
9. Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry, Transcripts, p.11782, Jake Buhler.
10. SP, 22 April 1977, "Warman to welcome uranium refinery."
11. SVN, 12 May 1977.
12. WDCCG, 19 May 1977, Newsletter.
13. WDCCG, "Letter to members of the Warman and District Concerned Citizens' Group and to others who have shown interest," 22 June 1977.
14. SP, 5 June 1977, "Anti-nuclearists head to city hall" and SP, 6 June 1977, "Anti-nuclear protesters plant trees at Warman site."
15. WDCCG, News Release, 23 September 1977, "Warman Citizens Frustrated with Inquiry."
16. WDCCG, Newsletter, 4 October 1977.

17. Cluff Lake Transcripts, 11834-7.
18. Ibid., 11784.
19. Ibid., 11793.
20. Ibid., 11855-6.
21. Ibid., 11754.
22. Ibid., loc. cit.
23. Ibid., 11851.
24. Ibid., 11805.
25. Ibid., 11852-3.
26. Ibid., 11757.
27. Ibid., 11756-68, Jim Robbins - WDCCG brief.
28. Ibid., 11846, Groome.
29. Ibid., 11848.
30. Ibid., 11829.



#### 4. THE "POLITICS" OF PROTEST

The Bayda Inquiry did not make its report until June of 1978 after all, and when it did, its recommendations were pretty much as expected. So much so that the energy committee of the SES pre-empted the publication of the report with their own, highly accurate, predictions of its contents, released to the press nearly a month before the Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry report was published. As the SES predicted the Board recommended that the mine/mill proceed, subject to an impressive array of provisos in every aspect of the project they had considered. They put particular emphasis on the health and safety of workers, the distribution of economic benefits and amelioration of social costs burden, northern participation and preservation of the northern environment. They were also concerned about the headlong pace of development that appeared to be becoming the norm in the Saskatchewan uranium industry, and recommended "orderly development" and "sequential and gradual development of uranium mine/mills in Saskatchewan."<sup>1</sup>

The Bayda Commission seemed temporarily to have exhausted public concern about the uranium issue. In the long wait for its report a federal election was fought, with scarcely a mention of the industry, even in the local campaign. WDCCG members were urged to make it an issue, particularly in the Saskatoon West constituency into which the Warman site fell, but the politicians proved, on the whole, evasive.

Consider telephoning, writing, or speaking in person to the declared candidates in Saskatoon West to discover their stand on nuclear policies in general and the uranium refinery in particular. This will be one of the local election issues if we make it one,

members were urged in the April 1978 Newsletter.<sup>2</sup> Bob Ogle, a Roman Catholic priest running for the NDP on the far side of the city, in Saskatoon

East, made it part of his platform, and was elected both then and in the subsequent election less than a year later. However, Ray Hnatyshyn, who had been willing earlier to question Liberal government procedures with regard to the uranium industry, was non-committal.

It was now two years since the purpose behind the SEDCO land negotiations in the district had been revealed. In that time the WDCCG had established themselves as major players in the nuclear debate in the province, but they were still a relatively small group. Attendance at the executive meetings had never exceeded a half-dozen, and general membership meetings averaged around 35 people. Since the spring of 1977, when they had launched themselves as a membership organization, the numbers had crept up steadily, until by mid-1978 there were close to 150 names on the mailing list. Their influence was out of all proportion to their actual members. The Bayda commission had sat in Warman in response to their representations. There was hardly a town or village in the immediate vicinity where they had not had a meeting, brought a speaker or a film, to raise the questions they believed had to be answered before the nuclear industry could be accepted as either safe or moral. They now knew a great deal more about the industry than they had in the summer of 1976, and also about organizing meetings, writing letters to politicians and "the editor", preparing news releases, and the difficulties of finding money to support a cause. However, their cause was in some respects still in limbo. The participation in the Cluff Lake Inquiry had proved to be a dead end for them. The Board had come to hear them, but their representations, and those of others like them, appeared to have had no effect on the outcome, a result, or lack of result, which tended to confirm local feeling about



the futility of protest. They seemed as far away as ever from affecting the climate of opinion that influenced the pro-development leanings of the local councils.

By June of 1978 the group was seriously looking at the strategies available and wondering where to go next. Edgar Epp's investigations into local planning were not encouraging. Should Corman Park Council decide to rezone the area held under option by Eldorado, they could petition against the rezoning. Conceivably they could even demand a referendum on the issue, given that they could get enough signatures. However, such a project would absorb a huge amount of time and effort, perhaps to no purpose. The final legal power still lay with the provincial, not the local, government. Regina could override local planning decisions, and even a local plebescite. While it might be true that any government would think twice about backing a project in an area where the local vote was against it, on the other hand the Warman area tended to vote for the PCs, both provincially and federally. For an NDP government there was not much support to lose there. The WDCCG might hope that party politics would not dictate the outcome in such an event, but it was as well to be aware of the possibilities.

None of this was any reason not to continue to remind those in power of the continued existence of local opposition to the refinery proposal. Nettie Wiebe was assigned to write to the premier and the leader of the opposition and the local representatives, federal and provincial, a process that was repeated by various members of the executive over the next year and a half. Their letters reached out across the continent seeking information on the nuclear industry that they could use in their struggle. They wrote to successive ministers of energy, mines and resources in Ottawa, as the Clark government fell and Marc LaLonde of the Liberal

government succeeded Ray Hnatyshyn in that portfolio, to local reeves and mayors and municipal secretaries and councillors, to aldermen and the Board of Trade in Saskatoon, and ultimately, to a growing list of people who might be willing to present a brief at the refinery hearings.

Gradually it was becoming clear that their strategy must have at its final objective a massive display of opposition to the refinery proposal at the hearings which both premier Blakeney and Eldorado had assured them would take place. Clearly the disappointingly small turnout at the Cluff Lake hearings must not be repeated, and the WDCCG must not be seen to be the sole voice of dissent in the district. Their lobbying must begin again, at home, to persuade people to be ready to speak out when the time came. It was not unlike a political campaign, and if they were going to get their "voters" out, they decided, they needed to conduct an old-fashioned "door-knocking, pamphlet distribution campaign," and make sure their pamphlet got into the hands of more than the already committed members.

In the meantime an event in Ontario offered them something to build on. Eldorado's application to build a refinery in Port Granby had been refused by the Environmental Assessment Review Panel. The group had been following the progress of the hearings in the east for some months, and had even sent their own observer to Port Granby. At the general meeting in August of '77 which had approved Jim Robbins' submission to the Cluff Lake Inquiry, the members had also agreed to send Bob Carleton, a Saskatoon engineer who had informed himself on the technical side of the nuclear industry, to Port Granby as an observer/consultant. The news in February that the panel had rejected the proposal was received with some

caution, pending the federal government's response to this rejection.

The April Newsletter had merely noted the event with the observation that the refinery proposed at Port Granby was "similar to the one proposed for Warman" and that the rejection gave them "renewed hope that environmental concerns will be carefully assessed here at Warman."<sup>3</sup> By the time the Bayda Report was out it was also apparent that the rejection of Eldorado's Port Granby proposal was going to stick. There would be no refinery built in Port Granby. FEARO was proceeding with plans to hear submissions regarding possible refinery sites at Sudbury, Blind River and Port Hope in Ontario from Eldorado.

Not only had the opponents to the Granby proposal won, the grounds on which the panel rejected it were applicable to the Warman situation. That good news became the basis for the renewed pamphlet campaign. Eventually the residents of Warman, Martensville, Osler, Hague, R.R.#4, Aberdeen and Dalmeny received copies, in English and German of the leaflet headed: "Cluff Lake, Yes; Warman, No? Achtung, Einwohner aus Warman und Umgebung!" The pamphlet pointedly drew the parallels between the Port Granby and Warman situations, quoting the report and freely adding editorial comment.

...the net effect on the local area would be negative [with] no long term benefit to the local community...conversely, the area does have high, long-term potential as an agricultural area with substantial productive capacity for specific forms of agriculture, such as dairying and cash crops. (Sounds as though they are talking about Warman, doesn't it?) ... If you care about what happens in and to your community, it is not too late for you to voice your opinion and concern. The government should listen if enough voices are heard.<sup>3</sup>

Although the referendum as a strategy was never returned to, numbers never ceased to be important. Numbers would make them audible, and might

eventually weight the balance of events in their direction.

It was several months before they were satisfied with their first attempt at a broadly-based appeal to the neighbourhood, and it was towards the end of the year before the leaflet was in the local mail boxes. The campaign recruited some younger members to the group, in a capacity one of them, Gary Boldt, modestly describes as "go-fers". Gary was entering his last year of high school when things first started in 1976. "It was being talked about all the time," he remembers. After high school he spent two years at the Swift Current Bible Institute, where a group of about six students from the Warman area continued to pursue the issue. "It's a Bible school so the subjects are mainly religious. But we did a lot of questioning too, about different issues, social issues, and uranium was certainly one of those."

They were aware of discussions going on at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, too, and gathered information from them, from the press, and from anti-nuclear groups in Saskatchewan. Gary recalled, "we went after every bit of information we could find, just to prepare ourselves, because we knew that somewhere down the road there'd be hearings ... so we kept digging away." Two of Peter Froese's children, William and Maria, were part of the group, and Peter and another son, Joe, recalled how the issue naturally became part of the family dinner-table discussions. Joe, who is a local trucker, commented that he was not "part of the process" as his father had been, that is, not an active member of the WDCCG, "but when it was time to speak up, well then ... I knew my opinions on these things. They were molded five years before it ever happened ... for me I can say it's part of my upbringing. For a lot of

people it's a problem, how to introduce this to my Mom and Dad? Here Mom and Dad introduce it to the children." Peter contradicted him jokingly, "Well, I thought we had been educated by you guys."

Leonard Doell, whose younger brother Murray had also been active in the "go-fer" group, remembered that his own relatively junior status turned out to be a disadvantage to him in one crucial bit of lobbying. He had been in touch with Mr. Mike Stahl, leader of the Hutterian Brethern Riverview Colony on the far side of the South Saskatchewan from the proposed refinery site. They had exchanged letters on the issue, and eventually talked directly to one another. "We related really well on the phone, and the times I communicated, because I had read a lot of Hutterite history and I knew Peter Riedmann's and Jacob Hutter's writings ... but I remember when I met Mike Stahl ... I introduced myself, and you know he looked at me, and he thought I should be older ... I wished I was 75 years old at that point because he would have heard me out then. But because I was young and my hair was over my ears ... I lost my credibility."

Not everyone, fortunately, responded in that way, and the talking campaign took many forms. Leonard recalled that Reverend John Reddekopp of the Bergthaler church "went round and talked with his people and with those people with whom he differed he dialogued ... basically it was a matter of sharing information. ... And that's exactly how that church operates. It works as a community. You seek God's will among the community of the believers." When Reverend Reddekopp spoke at the hearings, then, he spoke for the whole congregation of his church, as he indicated in his opening remarks:

I thought it God given for me to come here and not only speak for myself, but as a leader for the Bergthaler Mennonite Congregation. Our congregation consists of nine hundred and seventy-nine members, plus children, being a total of 1,998. Most of these people live, farm and work in the area from Saskatoon north to Rosthern. In the last while I've had a chance to speak to many of the members regarding the construction of the proposed uranium refinery by Eldorado Nuclear Ltd. at Warman, Saskatchewan, and they were all opposed and this includes myself. ...Mennonites believe that the way people can find fellowship is in caring for each other physically and spiritually. It's against our conscience to consent to a plant that will refine chemicals used to produce atomic weapons that could later be used to destroy the human race.

Gary remembered that their tasks included being the eyes and ears of the WDCCG as well. "If there was a meeting that somebody needed to attend, I would be the person that would go ... rallies, and information meetings about the uranium issue, and press conferences too, to see what was going on. But more than that it was just little errands in the community, like getting ready for meetings, or getting information ready to be mailed out. And also we'd go around and talk to different members of one group, and to people who weren't members ... about the refinery, and how we felt."

It is the talk that Gary remembered as being the overwhelming factor in carrying the community's awareness of the issue. The uranium

issue became a kind of community obsession. It was also, in Gary's view, "the thing that helped us win. I think it was definitely the education and the getting together as a community and talking about it. ...Finding out where, and how we felt, and just more information ... I think that was definitely our strength, community effort."

While the WDCCG continued to contribute all the information they could to the discussion, in mid-1978 it was not all clear how successful it would be. In June they held another information meeting in the Warman town hall, showing films ("The Last Slide Show" and "No Acts of God") drawn to their attention by the SES connection, to which about 30 people came. Strategically they had other concerns arising out of their experience with the Cluff Lake Inquiry. The dominance of expert testimony there seemed to be a warning, and they wondered if they would be well advised to have the help of a lawyer available when the refinery hearings came about. The anxiety about the effect of expert testimony remained with the group right up to the actual hearings. Some years later a writer for the CBC radio program "Ideas" coined the term "citizen experts" to describe the kind of informed community-response that was eventually revealed at the Warman refinery hearings.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime the WDCCG were tending to hedge their bets, concerned to have supporting experts, but also to highlight local feeling.

Leonard Doell remembered part of the drive to obtain expert testimony was the sense that the onus was on the group to prove that the refinery was bad, as it had been explicitly with the Cluff Lake Inquiry regarding the Amok mining project. The group objected to what they regarded as an inverted rationale, but felt they had to bow to it all the same. "They should have been proving to us that what they wanted to give

us was something good. Why should we have to prove it's bad for us? It doesn't make any sense to me," Doell said.

September 1978 also found the province plunged into an election campaign. The NDP government elected in 1975 had decided to go to the people again, and on October 18 were returned with an overwhelming majority -- 44 NDP seats to 17 P-C. The Liberal party had no representation in the new house. The 1978 provincial election was the only time the WDCCG actively supported a political candidate. The September 1978 newsletter noted that Peter Prebble "might be the only candidate in the current election who will make the nuclear issue an issue. Support for him in the form of donations, volunteer help, etc., would be appreciated."<sup>6</sup>

By April of 1979 a federal election campaign was being fought which resulted in the June election of the short-lived Joe Clark Conservative government. Peter Calamar of Southam News Services noted that nuclear energy had emerged as a surprise issue in the campaign, "confronting political parties with the question of a public inquiry into the safety of Candu reactors and of the entire nuclear fuel cycle." Both the Tory and NDP leaders were in favour of a national inquiry, according to Mr. Calamar. "However," he said "not all groups opposed to nuclear development are rushing to politicize the issue." He quoted Ernie Hildebrand as saying, "I don't think we want to get into that kind of political game."<sup>7</sup> The WDCCG's mild endorsement of Prebble's position was their only excursion into this arena.

Someone who was involved in the "political game," Ralph Katzman, the MLA for the Rosthern constituency, was nearly as reticent about his position on uranium refining as the WDCCG was on politics, although he was



willing to talk around it, so to speak. At the beginning of 1978 he had canvassed the constituency by mail, seeking local opinion on the uranium industry. A questionnaire to 5,625 constituents yielded a 20% response, and a vote of nearly 4 to 1 (803 to 224) against the construction of a refinery in the area. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents felt they had enough information available to them to answer the survey questions, and an overwhelming majority (818 to 183) were in favour of a local vote on uranium projects, whether they were a mine, refinery, nuclear power plant or nuclear waste disposal.<sup>8</sup> At the time Katzman declined to state his own views on the refinery proposal, but later in the year, in mid-July, delivered himself of a surprising prediction. "Let me state," he wrote in his column "Katzman's Comments" in The Saskatchewan Valley News, "that I believe that the Eldorado Refinery at Warman is dead at the location that was originally suggested, and options bought for."<sup>9</sup> There would be an announcement "later in the year when the house reconvenes" he wrote.

The announcement that Katzman anticipated never came, although he continued to try to precipitate one. During the following spring session of the provincial legislature he tried once more to put the government on the spot and precipitate a revelation, without success. During a question period with Premier Allan Blakeney, Katzman asked if he was aware that a representative of Eldorado had met with an official of the R.M. of Buckland, between Prince Albert and Shellbrook in the Minister of the Environment Ted Bowerman's constituency. The premier's response was negative, and so was Angus Fraser's, the Eldorado information officer in Saskatoon, who said he was aware of the visit by Gordon Burton, to "get some maps" but that they had nothing to do with a refinery site.<sup>10</sup>

It is also true that the provincial government had at various times from late 1976 on indicated publicly that they preferred Eldorado look at other sites. A year after Katzman's first prediction, in June of '79, Bowerman commented that "Eldorado has yet to satisfy Saskatchewan's request for environmental impact studies on more than one possible site for the refinery,"<sup>11</sup> and after the panel had declared its reservations on the Warman site came forward to offer a site in his constituency. Regina Leader-Post columnist, John Twigg, paid a visit to various Saskatoon businesses in 1980 shortly before the inquiry report came down. In Gordon Burton's office he noticed "behind a pillar a map of northern Saskatchewan, with a site near Shellbrook west of Prince Albert marked in barely visible, faded ink "Proposed Location." Burton "remembers it as perhaps the site favored by Environment Minister Ted Bowerman when he was minister of northern Saskatchewan," Twigg wrote.<sup>12</sup> On the whole, politics was certainly a game to avoid, given the difficulty of following the moves.

Even more complicated manoeuvres surrounded the siting of the refinery proposed for Ontario. The rejection of the Port Granby site was followed by hearings in November and December of 1978 on sites in Sudbury, Blind River and Port Hope. All three, the Port Hope one only four miles from the Port Granby site, were approved quickly. Eldorado moved to prepare engineering plans and ready the Port Hope site in 1979, only to be halted in April of 1980 by a new federal government. A new federal energy minister, Marc Lalonde, announced a decision to build in northern Ontario, at Blind River, "so that refining should be close to resources and that nuclear waste probably will be disposed of on The Canadian Shield."<sup>13</sup> As well as protecting northern Ontario from

exploitation by keeping the processing of resources in the area, the move rewarded a traditionally Liberal area with the promise of a \$133 million project and 230 jobs when completed.<sup>14</sup> Port Hope continued to be represented by Allan Lawrence, former Conservative solicitor-general, after the change of government.

At the federal level both the national Conservative party and the NDP supported the idea of an inquiry into the nuclear industry in the campaign of 1979. The leader of the NDP, Ed Broadbent, went further and recommended a moratorium on new nuclear facilities until such an inquiry was held, a position that put him embarrassingly at odds with the official position of the Saskatchewan NDP government. The Saskatchewan NDP position was in fact closest to that of the federal Liberal party. Both promoted the "Canadianization" of resource development in the country. Their only disagreement appeared to be about which level of government should exert most control and benefit most directly.

In the circumstances, the consequences of supporting a political party on the basis of its position on uranium seemed difficult to predict. There were other, equally compelling, reasons for discarding the political route as a possible strategy for the WDCCG. Many churches discouraged their members from any active participation in politics on religious grounds, and many local church members were dubious of even the relatively apolitical activities the group was engaged in. For the group members themselves, a powerful underlying motive for their opposition to the refinery was the preservation of the integrity of their community. To fight for that cause by means that the community, or a large part of it, would not approve, would be an intolerable contradiction for the "activists."

Most land use conflicts took place at the municipal level, and the RM of Corman Park was already the focus of one conflict when the refinery proposal was first made public. Encircling the City of Saskatoon as it does, urban pressure on rural land was chronic in the RM. This particular conflict came to a head in the municipal elections of 1978, when Charles Chappell, who farmed land in the RM that had been broken by his father in 1903, ran for the office of Reeve of the RM against a "rurbanite" candidate representing the development interest. Charles Chappell was elected, although the rural households in the RM where agriculture was not the principle source of income already outnumbered the farm homes (658 to 559). He had won on a campaign of making good neighbours of farmers and commuters, but found himself presiding over a council entirely preoccupied by development and related planning issues and problems. They imposed a planning "freeze" requiring that every construction proposal be submitted directly to Council. The provincial department of municipal affairs began to take an active interest in the RM's decisions, hoping to use Corman Park as a laboratory for developing model planning bylaws that might serve other RMs in the province with similar problems.

Thus the debate over the establishment of a uranium refinery in the area developed in what was already a pressure cooker. With the whole area in a state of flux, and its future undecided, there was no community consensus in the RM of Corman Park to appeal to. In this atmosphere individual decisions became more important even as they became more difficult. The landowners faced with the immediate decision of whether or not to sign options on their land could see that the future of agricultural land in the RM was already in doubt. In addition, if the

Eldorado proposal were approved, the planning freeze would require the company to apply directly to the eleven-member RM Council for the rezoning and construction permits that would be required. Personal loyalties, group loyalties, notions of progress, profit motives, religious beliefs, all came under scrutiny and under pressure in the brewing conflict.

In the meantime Eldorado Nuclear had been active as well. The company hired Beak Consultants of Saskatoon to conduct an environmental impact study of the Warman site. They began work in July, and by August the company announced that the initial tests related to groundwater were encouraging. Their spokesman, Gordon Burton, declined to explain the results, which were to be published when the whole assessment "package" was ready for presentation to government.<sup>15</sup> However, by January 1979 the company apparently felt free to release the information. By that time the impact statement was in draft form, according to Frank Hueston, production manager for Eldorado's refinery division and the man who would likely have headed the Warman refinery,<sup>16</sup> and the company was in the midst of an energetic public relations effort to "sell" the refinery. An impervious clay layer, the water under which was apparently 30,000 years old, indicated to the company's consultants that hydrological conditions were favourable to the containment of spills.<sup>17</sup>

In September 1978 company president Nicholas Ediger stated that the company would not build a uranium refinery near Warman if it was clearly demonstrated a majority of residents in the area did not want one. At the same time he revealed that the proposed refinery site might also become a long-term storage site for the waste products of the process, which would themselves have a low level of radioactivity. Both statements

returned to haunt him. The "numbers game" implied in the term "majority" was played by both the defenders and the opponents of the proposal. How was a majority to be determined? In the face of the overwhelming rejection of the refinery by participants at the hearings the company was to fall back on indications of support from local councils as representative of "real" public feeling. The question of storing waste products remained a difficult one as well. Massive amounts of even low-level radioactive material was not a legacy many people wanted to leave to the generations to follow them on the land.

By the end of the year Eldorado was making its first attempts to get a grip on the public relations problem it faced in the area where it proposed to build a refinery. A consultant by the name of Ed Martens was hired by the company to gather information on the local community and the opposition to the refinery. Mr. Martens talked to some local business people, members of the WDCCG recalled, and to Frank Letkeman, editor of the Saskatchewan Valley News. Martens also attempted some information gathering in Winnipeg. He talked to Roy Vogt, pastor of a Mennonite congregation there and professor of economics at the University of Manitoba, who declined to participate in Mr. Martens' research as it appeared to him that Martens was merely looking for information to discredit the Warman opposition group.

Piecing together their memories of this episode in their acquaintance with corporate strategies, the group recalled that Martens went on to talk to members of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg about setting up some lectures for Eldorado people on Mennonite history and Mennonite thought. Harry Huebner and David Schroeder at the

College suggested a "forum" rather than a lecture, to include students and representation from the Warman group. Edgar Epp recalled "they [Eldorado] had finally agreed to it, but they didn't want this representative from Warman." However, Schroeder checked with Epp by phone, and as a result he and Huebner insisted that Warman have "at least one representative there."

The forum never took place. Throughout this episode Eldorado appears to have believed they were invisible, rather like the elephant in the joke who painted his toenails red to camouflage his presence in the cherry tree. Moreover, they appear to have been under the impression that the Warman group were a kind of ethnic special case, existing in isolation from the rest of the community. Certainly they responded as if unaware of the private and public interconnections in the larger Mennonite community, and of the fact that ties of friendship and kinship would make it inevitable that news of Mr. Martens' activities would be carried back to the Warman group. Edgar Epp recalled that a year later, when David Schroeder was appointed to advise the refinery panel on Mennonite thought, the panel secretary, Bob Connelly, was a day late in letting the group know, because the "network" was faster. The night before Connelly phoned to tell Jake Buhler "You'll be the first to know" about the appointment, Schroeder had called to pass on the news himself. However, there was nothing clandestine about Mr. Connelly's activities. The curious aspect of Eldorado's attempt to inform themselves through Martens is the distance they tried to put between the company and the consultant. When the Group asked company officials about Martens' role, Gordon Burton's first response was to deny that Martens had worked for them. "We pushed it a little bit further"

Epp recalled, and Nettie Wiebe remembered Angus Fraser, public relations officer for the company explained "He was not on our staff. He was doing some work for us on a consulting basis." "He may have been on contract" were the words Edgar Epp recalled, an explanation, they agree, with laughter, which allowed Mr. Burton to appear to have merely misinterpreted the question. Eventually, Mr. Burton phoned Ernie Hildebrand to explain that Ed Martens was in the area doing a little public relations work for them.<sup>18</sup>

The "Ed Martens story" eventually found its way into the local press. Eldorado Nuclear Limited, the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix reported at the end of the month, "is back-grounding itself on the issues the Warman group is likely to present." Reporter Jim Duggleby implied that Eldorado had been attempting an "end run on the Warman Mennonites" by going to the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg for the backgrounding they might have gotten closer to home. He also thought that the Winnipeg group's insistence on involving representation from the WDCCG in any meeting killed the plan. Harry Huebner at the College told Duggleby that the College insisted on Warman representation because it did not want to get caught between the Warman group and Eldorado on the issue. However, Angus Fraser, Eldorado's public relations man, put down the notion that the company had given any weight to the possibility of a Winnipeg meeting. The term "meeting" was itself a bit heavy for what he had in mind. "Discussion" would be more appropriate, and the postponement was due to other, pressing, engagements, he claimed.<sup>19</sup>



## FOOTNOTES

1. The Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry Final Report, Department of Environment, Regina: 1978.
2. WDCCG Newsletter, 28 April 1978.
3. Ibid.
3. "Attention Citizens of Warman and Surrounding Area," [n.d.], WDCCG leaflet, prepared by Edgar Epp.
4. Ibid.
5. "Ideas." CBC radio, 15 January 1985, "The Citizen Scientist."
6. WDCCG Newsletter, September 28, 1978.
7. Calamar, Peter, "Surprise Issue," Southam News Service, 23 April 1979.
8. SP, 10 January 1978.
9. SVN, 20 July 1978.
10. SP, 14 April 1979.
11. SP, 13 June 1979.
12. Leader-Post, May 1980.
13. L-P, 28 April 1980.
14. Leader-Post, 29 November 1979, "Toronto NDP Convention."
15. SP, 15 August 1978.
16. SP, 25 January 1979.
17. SP, 25 January 1979.
18. WDCCG Executive Minutes, 15 January 1979.
19. SP, 31 March 1979, p.25.



## 5. THE PACE ACCELERATES

By January of 1979 Eldorado public relations initiatives were bringing company representatives together with town councils, business groups, and the media throughout the district. For three days in mid-January Frank Hueston, production manager for Eldorado's refinery division and the man named to head the Warman refinery, and Jim Bonny, assistant general manager of refineries, carried their campaign to local groups. They then turned their attention to the media, in what one local newspaper analyst described as "an intensive public relations campaign aimed at selling its proposal for a \$100 million uranium refinery at Warman."<sup>1</sup> In a succession of press conferences they revealed they were confidently looking forward to the start of construction in 1982, once the "hurdles" of rezoning the site and public hearings were cleared. The next stage of the campaign was a series of invitations to visit Port Hope in Ontario, so that local people could see for themselves how one community lived with a uranium refinery.

The Eldorado people had reason to feel confident, even ebullient. Between 1977 and 1978 the company's revenue had more than doubled and its profits had increased by ten times. In 1977 there had been a profit of \$2.2 million with revenues of 46.6 million; in 1978 the profit was \$22 million on revenues of \$102.7 million. They had spent \$20 million on their Beaverlodge mine in northern Saskatchewan, expanding the capacities of both the mine and mill, and they planned to build 250 more houses in Uranium City and a \$25 million hydroelectric facility on the Charlot River. Eldor Resources, their new, wholly owned subsidiary, was engaged in a joint exploration and mining venture with SMDC and Uranerz at Key Lake which

they expected would be producing six million pounds of uranium ore by 1983 (the 1978 production of Beaverlodge was 1.3 million pounds), and in early March they received approval for a new \$100 million refinery in Ontario in Hope Township.<sup>2</sup> The federal environmental assessment panel had refused application to build in Port Granby, but had approved a site virtually next door in Hope, and sites near Sudbury and Blind River, also in Ontario.

The WDCCG was not overlooked in this round of lobbying. They went to their first formal meeting with the Eldorado group more than a little doubtful of their ability to match the confidence and persuasiveness of the company men. Gordon Burton had extended the invitation to Ernie Hildebrand during the conversation about the "public relations" work being done in the area for the company by Ed Martens. The meeting was set for January 23rd, and the WDCCG prepared for it with some care. Jim Robbins was asked back from Calgary, where Nettie was studying, and the executive was temporarily extended to include a few other supporters.

In the event the dreaded meeting was a turning point for the group. "That meeting," Jake Buhler recalled, "was their [Eldorado's] first realization that the people they were going to face would not fall over." "They thought they would answer all our questions that evening!" Nettie Wiebe remembered, still astonished in retrospect at the company men's expectations. The meeting that had seemed so intimidating in anticipation turned out to be a revelation of strength for the group. Ernie Hildebrand comments, "Our resolve was stronger after we'd met them, when we realized they could not answer our questions, they could not respond to our concerns. I think we really felt a lot stronger and more secure about what we were pushing."

The questions that the WDCCG felt Eldorado could not answer concerned the land, the community, and the arms race. Was the nine quarters of "exclusion area" around the 20 to 30 acre refinery site required because the refinery would be unsafe? Eldorado's response, that the buffer zone was necessary to "maintain background conditions insofar as radiation background is concerned" was neither informative nor reassuring. Their response to queries about waste disposal were even less satisfactory to the group. Some 2,000 tons of radioactive waste material would be generated annually if the refinery were commissioned. There seemed to be no firm plan for disposing of it, and little hope that it might be done safely. Temporary storage would be in steel drums above the ground. These might eventually be buried 200 or 300 feet below ground level at the site, or elsewhere in Saskatchewan. "We have to experiment," Ron Dakers, Eldorado's vice-president, frankly admitted. "We will do the best we know how in the light of existing information." The effect of the company's good intentions were somewhat overshadowed by the fact that no safe method of disposing of nuclear waste has yet been devised anywhere in the world. The "acceptable levels of safety" Eldorado met the inevitable response from the WDCCG, "Acceptable according to whose standards?"<sup>3</sup>

The question of how the company might decide whether they were wanted in the community remained unanswered too. The WDCCG were anxious to turn President Nicholas Ediger's fall statement, that the company would not build where they were not wanted, into a commitment on the part of Eldorado. They wanted to know, "How would it be honoured?" On their side the company people were very anxious not to be manoeuvred into a corner on that issue. They were clear about what they would not do. They would not seek a referendum. Nothing could be decided until the public hearings

were held. The hearings were still in a jurisdictional limbo, as far as anyone knew, between the federal and provincial governments, and company officials declined to speculate on whether more than one set of hearings might be held. In February Angus Fraser once again deflected the question, claiming he could not yet "lay out a formula" on how the extent of opposition or support would be judged. In fact, he was deliberately vague about the likelihood of any formula, or mechanism, being established. "I think it would become patently obvious at some point that our further intrusion into the lifestyle of Warman would not be acceptable," he told Jim Dugglesby of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix (emphasis added).<sup>4</sup>

At least one member of the provincial government apparently took the view that the question was already settled. Speaking at a debate sponsored by the students at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Environment Minister Ted Bowerman equated the NDP's landslide provincial election victory of the previous October with a mandate for uranium development. Bob Fink, an aggressively "anti-nuke" member of Saskatoon Coalition Against Nuclear Development (SCAND), opposing Bowerman in the debate with Peter Prebble, now the MLA (NDP) for Saskatoon-Sutherland, had cited Ediger's September 1978 statement and challenged Bowerman to "let the people vote on it." Bowerman replied, in effect, that they already had. He was booed by an obviously partisan audience for making the statement, and after the debate assured his audience that he was not equating the election results with a referendum on the Warman refinery but with uranium development generally. However, in view of his strong pro-development stand (his debating partner was Marcel Tabouret, general manager of the French uranium firm Amok Ltee) his redirection was less than

fully convincing, especially as he had also stated that the provincial government would reserve the right to decide whether the refinery would be built.<sup>5</sup>

The question of the end use of the refinery product was the most serious one for the WDCCG and the one where they were least satisfied that good intentions were enough. The uranium hexafluoride to be produced was intended for export, and the group were by now convinced that Canadian "safeguards" against the diversion of the material or its by-products into military uses were illusory. India had exploded a nuclear device in May of 1974, fueled by materials obtained through a CANDU contract, and Canada was wooing customers like Argentina and Iran, who were not signatories to the United Nations' non-proliferation treaty. The Saskatchewan government crown corporation SMDC was in partnership with the government of France, through AMOK, and France had an active nuclear weapons testing program in the Pacific. In the United States all nuclear material, whether intended for military or civilian use, was administered by the military, and extra-territorial agencies had no real influence on its disposition. The group feared that Canadian exports could well be contributing to the arms race. The Eldorado representatives had more faith in the contractual safeguard being required of purchasing countries by the federal sales agent AECL, and urged the value to the province and the country of the trade dollars gained. It was a stand-off.

The meeting between the two groups involved the coming together of individuals, and not merely the confrontation of two "blocs" of players in what one of the local papers that spring called the "drama" of the refinery debate.<sup>6</sup> Exchanges at the personal level in their first formal

meeting had revealed a mutual incomprehension between the two groups that was never really removed. Edgar Epp recalled, "Frank Heuston got very upset when Mary asked him to acknowledge that we were talking about a moral issue." Mary and her husband Peter Froese, son of the Peter Froese on the WDCCG executive, were visiting from Colorado Springs, where they are members of a small community operating a food bank and clothing depot, and actively protesting against the military activities at nearby Rocky Flats. Both were present at the meeting with Eldorado as part of the "extended" executive.

Frank Hueston said, Edgar Epp recalled, "that he was a Sunday school teacher, he was a moral person, and nobody was going to call him immoral." Edgar attempted to bridge the gap, but it proved impossible. "At coffee I took him aside and said, 'Nobody's calling you immoral. All we are asking is that you acknowledge that we are talking about a moral issue.' But he just could not get past that one, and then they called a second meeting." The mutual incomprehension on the moral issue stemmed largely from the totally different perspectives of two groups. For the company people, and for the panel which followed them in examining the issue of the refinery, the moral "element" was just that, one of many aspects of the problem to be considered, along with environmental elements, cost/benefit elements, and so on. For the WDCCG the moral was the context in which the whole issue was examined. Thus by their reasoning, consideration of the moral issue preceded and affected examination of all aspects of the project. It was not, as it was for others, one element to be assessed and "labelled" negative or positive.



To some extent Judge Bayda's commission had the same difficulty with the "moral issue". For Judge Bayda the moral was essentially the community standard, the "mores" of the community as the original Latin root of the word suggests. He described ethical reasoning as a process of choosing the least harmful alternative, or the most "desirable alternative".<sup>7</sup> Ethical reasoning thus becomes essentially a comparative study of consequences and results to come up with the best the situation offers. A decision on whether a thing is good or bad depends on community standards and a comparative analysis to discover how relatively harmful or beneficial the action would be. "Ethical reasoning", he wrote, "if it is to lead to valid ethical judgements about the development and use of nuclear energy, had to recognize global problems for expanding population, hunger, poverty, and illiteracy, and had to recognize global aspirations and expectations in health care, education and satisfaction of basic needs."<sup>8</sup> Thus he finds moral decisions infinitely more complex for the post-nuclear industrialized society, because mass communications has made us all part of a global community with widely differing mores.<sup>9</sup>

Judge Bayda was disappointed that the Interchurch Energy Committee of Saskatchewan, representing five Christian denominations, did not make a formal statement on the moral aspect of the issue before him, although individual members of the committee did address his inquiry. At the local hearing of the Cluff Lake Inquiry in Warman an attempt was made by the panel to raise the "moral" issue that developing energy sources like uranium in Canada would free world stocks of other non-renewable energy sources for energy hungry third world countries. However, in Warman at least, the audience found it hard to believe that altruism was behind the drive to develop the uranium industry.

Both approaches to the moral problem of uranium -- the attempt to reduce it to one aspect among many, and the attempt to define it as a means of choosing the least harmful or most beneficial action -- were inadequate from the point of view of the WDCCG. In addition they neglected the spiritual element altogether, so that the moral examination of an issue was a very different process from that which, for example, Reverend Reddekopp and his congregation undertook.

A second brief meeting was held a week later during which Eldorado unsuccessfully urged the WDCCG executive to give them a copy of their membership list. Ernie Hildebrand recalled,

We thought that was unusual. We asked what they wanted it for, and they said they wanted to provide our membership with factual information. We thought it over for a while and asked them to submit their material to us in envelopes and stamped, and we would address it and send it to our members.

Eldorado did not respond to the WDCCG's counter-offer, and Hildebrand thought that "possibly at that point" they decided to initiate their own citizens' group.<sup>10</sup>

Yet another meeting with the Eldorado team was held on February 14, at Martensville rather than Warman. There the WDCCG members met Andy Roake for the first time, the energetic newly-appointed "project supervisor" whose apparent imperviousness to any but a "pro-development" point of view came closer to arousing real personal hostility in his opponents than anything else they were to face in the coming months. Andy Roake had previously acted as the superintendent of waste management and environmental control at the Port Hope refinery.

As well as introducing Mr. Roake, the Eldorado group had requested another meeting to deal with the questions raised by the group. "We realized after our last meeting that we have not been sufficiently prepared to deal with your concerns and objections," Frank Hueston told them.<sup>11</sup> The company officials offered further details on an experimental waste disposal method under study, consisting of returning the refinery waste to the mine of origin for further processing, but did not address the other questions that had been raised. The moral issue remained the great gulf, as the Valley News observed in an editorial at the beginning of March. Describing the WDCCG as the source of "the major resistance to the project" the editor commented:

While many of the group's concerns focus on the environmental aspects such as the disposal of radioactive spills and possible contamination of a largely agricultural region, Eldorado is now faced with a moral issue, presented by the group, which it does not seem able to cope with. Concerned Citizens Group, Ernie Hildebrand, pointed out that the moral argument, posed by his group, is that the nuclear chain inevitably leads to the production of weapons of war, an issue which Mennonites have traditionally opposed.<sup>12</sup>

Not only was it unclear to the editor how Eldorado proposed to meet the arguments of the WDCCG, it was also, apparently, unclear to the company. Angus Fraser, public relations representative, frankly admitted that neither he nor his company were qualified to carry on such a debate knowledgeably. The questioning stance of the WDCCG, which had arisen originally out of their collective doubt and anxiety and lack of knowledge of the nuclear industry, was evolving into a tactic that was hard to beat.

It was also apparent that not everyone in the company saw the problem as clearly as did Angus Fraser. A month after the second meeting with the WDCCG Eldorado Nuclear's director of corporate affairs, Gordon Burton, was still convinced that opposition largely stemmed from "the fact that they haven't had an opportunity to find out." He apparently still believed that the company was facing a problem in public relations, or public information, and not a critical conflict over community goals. "Although I understand these people having some concern and being in some cases worried, I think it's mostly because they're listening to people who are themselves scared, or who have some other motive altogether," he said. Mr. Burton felt that the ordinary citizens should have faith in "your government, in your bodies of government, regulatory authorities, or do you think they're all crazy, that they have no conscience?"<sup>13</sup>

However, Mr. Burton's vague suggestion that the opponents of the project were merely fearmongering was hardly an adequate assessment of the opposition the company faced. Looking back on it, Frank Letkeman, then editor of the Valley News, thinks Eldorado entirely underestimated the force and extent of the silent approval in the district of the work the WDCCG was doing. "Some influential people took a very active role in opposing the refinery," he reflected. "Edgar Epp had been a school teacher in the area, and was well known, Jake Buhler was principal of the Martensville school, Ernie Hildebrand was pastor of the Osler General Conference Mennonite Church." A very large percentage of the population had already made up their minds, he thought.

A major factor in misleading the Eldorado people was the support the project received from local political and community leaders, including

councils and boards of trade, and the leadership of the nearby Hutterite colony. The next stage in their campaign was to fly representatives of local government and business to Port Hope so they could see for themselves the town that had lived with a nuclear refinery for nearly 50 years. The results in the Warman district were apparently all that the company could wish. Warman Town Council, now under a new mayor, Dave Kessler, announced that they endorsed the plans for Saskatchewan. However, the councillors cautiously reserved the right to change their minds, if it appeared that their constituents were against the project. "Should the town be convinced when the time comes that the uranium refinery should not go ahead, council can still back the anti-refinery forces," Mayor Kessler said.<sup>14</sup>

The RM of Corman Park made up for the other's lack of enthusiasm in their endorsement. The Corman Park Council took advantage of the opportunity offered by the company's announcement in late spring that the Environmental Impact Study was nearly ready to be forwarded to the AECB to make a statement of support. They were ready to change the zoning to accommodate the company's plans. They were satisfied that the safety of the company's procedures, especially with regard to waste disposal, had been amply demonstrated. In view of the energy shortage they were persuaded would develop in the next two decades, and the "substantial social and economic benefits to Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon region, and to the rate-payers of the RM of Corman Park in particular,"<sup>15</sup> that they expected would flow from the development, they were "one hundred per cent for it." Reeve Charles Chappell admitted to being a little leery of radiation, "but when I went in there they gave me this white coat to walk around with in there and I realized the chemical plant we have here is just as dangerous,"<sup>16</sup>

he said, referring to the United Chemicals Limited plant on the edge of Saskatoon.

Eventually Eldorado also won a qualified endorsement at the hearings from Reverend Michael Stahl, leader of the Riverview Hutterite Colony. Riverview is about 20 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon and about two kilometres across the South Saskatchewan River from the proposed refinery site. It is a colony of about 12 families operating a mixed farm which includes a dairy herd.<sup>17</sup> The apparent defection of the colony was especially painful for Mennonite members of the WDCCG, who felt themselves to be co-religionists. The Hutterians are also Anabaptists; they adhere to the principle of owning all things in common, and live in "Christian communes" where they have settled in the prairie provinces. Mr. Stahl spoke twice to the panel on behalf of the Riverview congregation. His testimony revealed the strains imposed by the strong competition for their endorsement waged by both sides from the spring of 1979 to the closing days of the hearings in January 1980.

Essentially his message was that "we cannot stop progress,"<sup>18</sup> and that we cannot "hold people manufacturing rifles responsible ... because one man used a rifle for what it was not meant for."<sup>19</sup> Rev. Stahl also referred to the value of the peaceful uses of uranium products, especially medical uses. "I think we are now at the day and age when uranium can be used safely; not to destroy human lives, but to save them."<sup>20</sup> However, their position was one of toleration, not active support. In his final statement Mr. Stahl said, "We of the Riverview Colony have never supported Eldorado Nuclear Ltd., that is to say, we have never encouraged them to build the refinery at the proposed site."<sup>21</sup> He also said, "We all

quite agree with the Concerned Citizens Group, that if the proposed refinery is built here, that we would like them to use all the safety procedures to ensure the safety, not only of their employees, but of the land, the river, and the people."<sup>22</sup>

The Hutterians were asked to oppose the refinery in the spring of 1979, and were offered their first trip to Port Hope at almost the same time. The leaders from three colonies accepted the trip to Port Hope after harvest, in October of 1979, and were impressed by the overwhelming approval of Eldorado Nuclear expressed by the townspeople, and by the frankness with which the company officials discussed their pollution problems and the measures being taken to overcome them.<sup>23</sup> However, not all members of the colony were persuaded of the harmlessness of Eldorado's operations, and insisted on a second trip, which took place after Rev. Stahl had submitted his first brief to the panel. The second trip resulted in a further statement from Stahl representing the colony, and endorsing, if not the presence of a nuclear refinery in Saskatchewan, then the good intentions of the company and its standing as a corporate citizen in Port Hope, Ontario.

Clearly personal contacts were an important element in the competition for support. Leonard Doell of the WDCCG remembers his own efforts to communicate with the Hutterite leadership with some chagrin. He had been chosen as the chief WDCCG contact with the colony partly because an aunt of his was a member. Looking back, he had the impression that his relative youth undermined his effectiveness as an emissary. "I phoned Mike Stahl and also corresponded with him a bit. And he sent me their briefs and I think he sent me a letter too ... but I remember when I met him, I introduced myself, and you know he looked at me, and he thought I

should be older. I wished I was 75 years old at that point, because he would have heard me out then. But because I was young and my hair was over my ears I lost my credibility."

However, although the Riverview Colony apparently spoke with one voice on the proposal at the hearings, Leo Driedger of the University of Manitoba thought they remained divided on the issue, and "never did support it." During the hearings Driedger, a sociologist acting as an expert witness for the WDCCG, told Ron Dakers of Eldorado that he was "amazed" that the Hutterites would "write a brief like they did, which is in total contradiction to their ideology."<sup>24</sup> He learned through interviews that only one member of the leadership actually endorsed the project.<sup>25</sup> Paul Tschetter, secretary of the colony remembered that afterward the colony members were relieved when the refinery was turned down. "Most of them didn't want it," he said.<sup>25</sup>

These endorsements, especially those from local councils, were misleading because it was never very clear just who the councils represented. Mr. Letkeman's weekly, the Saskatchewan Valley News, had more than once deplored the fact that the voter turnout for local elections was very poor, and frequently positions were filled by acclamation. Participation in politics, even the non-partisan local elections, was not a tradition in the district.

Mr. Letkeman himself was included in one of the tours, and saw the Port Hope establishment in the company of the Warman Town Council. The visit left him in something of a quandry as a responsible newspaper man. The experience, and conversations with people in Warman, convinced him that the issue was more complicated technically than he could handle editorially,



and perhaps more complicated politically as well. He remembers it was a bit like being caught between the upper and nether millstones, to be called upon to take a position between Eldorado and the WDCCG.

The problem was one of logistics as well as editorial viewpoint. "We didn't have the staff to cover those events personally, and we didn't have the time. So we relied on what people sent in to us. It wasn't the best way, maybe, but it was the best we could do. We didn't take sides editorially. We told the Warman group, 'We'll cooperate as much as possible.' And we told the Eldorado group we'd do the same for them."

Mr. Letkeman was not exaggerating the importance or sensitivity of his position. The paper, founded in 1903 in Rosthern, is an important local tradition. Edgar Epp was typical of many in that he continued to subscribe all during the time that he worked outside of Saskatchewan. His first knowledge of the refinery issue came from reading Jim Robbins', Jake Buhler's and Nettie Wiebe's letters, before he returned to Saskatchewan from British Columbia. Letkeman was also very sensitive to his readership. He himself is a "Russlaender", having been only five weeks old when his parents left Russia with the first group of Mennonite refugees to come to Canada from there in 1923. When he joined the paper in 1946 it was being directed by another Russlaender, Dietrich Epp, who had been a high school principal in the "old country".

The policy of even-handedness did not entirely solve Mr. Letkeman's problem, largely because the WDCCG were much more active in getting their information to him. The group arranged for him to receive the SES newsletter, and used to the full Letkeman's commitment to print editorials, front page stories and letters to the editor. By fall Eldorado

were openly protesting what seemed to them to be not even-handedness, but an unfair bias in the paper, and Frank Letkeman was moved to defend his policy. In mid-October Andy Roake wrote to the paper protesting that "We cannot recall seeing a single pro-nuclear letter in your paper." He also complained that the editor had been silent on his own impressions of Port Hope, and forwarded a copy of an editorial about the Three Mile Island disaster suggesting that much of the anxiety about it was created by media fraud. He challenged Mr. Letkeman to print his offerings. The editor did, and in addition provided his own explication of the "battle for the media" which had been taking place.

He noted that his own fears were allayed by the tour, and that he was impressed by the Port Hope people's support of the proposal to build a second refinery there. But his policy remained the same. He was not ready to "line up with the anti-nuclear proponents," but neither was he ready to tackle "a topic of such high technical nature." The problem was, "we must point out that to date we have not received any letters or reader comments promoting the pro-nuclear story." He continued "had we received any such letters, they would have been given the same consideration as those that were published. And they still will."<sup>27</sup>

Eldorado, more accustomed to dealing with media organizations who had their own staff reporters and the resources to cover "both sides" of a story, were not able to fine tune their public relations program sufficiently to adapt to the requirements of a small town weekly. The result was that, except for a paid advertising campaign carrying information about uranium refining generally and the anticipated benefits of the proposed refinery to the district, the Eldorado "story" was virtually absent from an important local vehicle.

Meanwhile, if the prospect of meeting formally with the Eldorado group was intimidating for the WDCCG, the intensive public relations campaign that the company was conducting was also putting them on the spot. They had been in the field long enough, and had campaigned strongly enough, that they had emerged as the main, indeed, the "official" opposition to the proposed project. Their status made it inevitable that the company would invite them to participate in the tours planned; it also made it a very awkward decision for the group.

Ernie Hildebrand remembered, "Well, we really didn't want to go that badly, but they realized they had to ... to have integrity they had to invite us. How could they not invite us, their main opponents? And we on the other hand couldn't say no because we'd lose our credibility." However, before the WDCCG could accept such an invitation, especially in the role of "main opponents", they had to check with their constituency. For two years they had been operating on a skeleton crew, with perhaps half-a-dozen to a dozen active members turning up at each meeting. The executive group always felt responsible to the larger membership, but weren't always able to get direction from them when it was wanted. Ernie Hildebrand remembers, "My frustration was that we as executive sought advice from the larger membership, but that advice didn't often materialize. Members came out to learn and generally put total trust in the executive to carry on with plans. This put a lot of pressure on the executive."

A general meeting was called for early March 1979, to consider the invitation from Eldorado, and to consider the question of whom they really represented. Over fifty people turned out, about 20 more than previous "general" meetings had attracted, and about one-third of the total

membership of 150. Most of the newcomers had come in response to personal invitations from friends or family. Experience had taught the WDCCG that "word of mouth" worked better for them with their constituency than less personal mass communication methods. Part of the business of the meeting was to pass out the newly printed membership cards Jake Buhler had arranged for, and to urge the members to sign up others.

Ironically, the Eldorado "blitz" had worked for the opposition as well as it had for the company. WDCCG supporters who had hitherto been silent were alerted to the immediacy of the issue by the media attention company plans were receiving. Within three weeks of the meeting WDCCG membership was up to 500, and it continued to rise, passing the 800 mark at the end of the year.

The meeting also fully endorsed the acceptance of the invitation to see Port Hope. The issue was discussed until a consensus was reached and a panel of representatives chosen. Two of the landowners who had made the same trip nearly three years previously, in the summer of 1976, lent their support to sending a delegation. Dick Friesen strongly urged the group to see for themselves; Jake Siemens observed dryly, "It's not what they show you, it's what they don't show you that matters."<sup>28</sup> They made their acceptance conditional on getting "time off" to visit with the Port Granby group, Save our Environment from Atomic Pollution (SEAP), who had successfully opposed the building of a second refinery in their area in 1978. "The full history of Port Hope is not available with an Eldorado guided tour," Ernie Hildebrand reported in the Valley News when the group came back. "The Warman group took another tour and found another story."<sup>29</sup> The meeting also took time to review the kind of fight they were facing,

and to wonder if they could rely on President Ediger's assurance that opposition from a majority of the population would put an end to the proposal. The consensus of the meeting was that the forces supporting the development were too many, too various and in some cases too powerful to be swayed by a simple expression of opposition, even by a majority. They had a long fight facing them.

Just before the group's departure at the end of April, an accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania aroused public anxiety about safety in the nuclear industry to near hysteria. The United States' Nuclear Regulatory Commission eventually found Metropolitan Edison Co., the operators of the facility, in violation of 17 regulations. The violations ranged from incorrect procedures to failures to repair or report leakages. The failure of regulatory agencies and public inspection systems to do their job was nearly as frightening to the public as the threat of leakage of radioactive material from the plant. A Reuter's News Agency report in May of 1979 on the still-leaking reactor noted that "more and more members of the U.S. Congress appear anxious to tell the nuclear industry there won't be business as usual after the Three Mile Island accident."<sup>30</sup>

In April the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada (AECB) was prompted to ask the operators of the 20 Candu pressurized heavy water nuclear reactors in Canada to report on whether the sequence of events that led to the Three Mile Island Accident could happen in Canada. And the provincial government in Saskatchewan was questioned in the legislature about the \$78 million in the budget estimates of the department of mineral resources for uranium activity in the 1979-80 fiscal year. Premier Allan

Blakeney was confident any "cooling" effect on the uranium market of the Three Mile Island accident would only be temporary. Mineral resources minister Jack Messer took the optimistic view that the response to the accident actually proved that nuclear technology can be controlled. The incident was a "near disaster, not a disaster," he said.<sup>31</sup>

By the time the WDCCG party went to Port Hope they had done their homework on Eldorado's rather checkered past as a corporate citizen, and they had already established contact with the protest group there who could present them with another point of view. Sometimes they made fun of their adversarial role. Ernie Hildebrand remembers joking about their safety in the company's charge. "If you're going to take us around in your bus are you sure that the brakes are going to be O.K.?" By coincidence the bus that they started out in did have to be returned because the driver felt the brakes didn't work. They found a dead sparrow, and "threatened" to take it back to Warman as evidence of dead birds in Port Hope.

Much of the "homework" they had done was from Fred Knelman's work. Dr. Knelman had already been to Warman to speak on the nuclear industry and was to come again shortly after their return. He was a founder and first chairman of the Montreal Committee for the Control of Radiation Hazards, later to evolve into the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND), a founder and first chairman of Citizens for Social Responsibility in Science, and a founding member of the Canadian Peace Research and Education Association. His thorough understanding of the nuclear industry is happily matched with an ability to demystify information about it for lay audiences. His book Nuclear Energy, The Unforgiving Technology became an important reference for the WDCCG.

They were particularly interested in the history he provides of the contamination of Port Hope by its dominating industry. Wastes from refining operations have been dumped, or even used for fill, in Port Hope since Eldorado Gold Mines first began processing ores in 1933. At various times investigations had been carried out, but it was not until 1976 that their results became general knowledge. The army had done surveys, in the early 1950s, during the atomic scare precipitated by the Korean War, and found the beach radioactive. Professor D. G. Andrews, in a study for the provincial health and environmental authorities in 1966, discovered extremely dangerous waste disposal practices and failures to comply with regulations, especially in the Port Granby area. In 1975 Energy Probe (part of Pollution Probe of the University of Toronto) took a CBC camera crew and technicians from the Gamma Graph Co., of Toronto to study three dump sites. They were, as far as Professor Andrews could tell, in some cases worse than they had been previously. The publicity moved the AECB to announce that they were doing their own study of Port Hope waste disposal studies, a study apparently completed in July of 1975, but not released until February of 1976. Knelman writes:

The essential information in the report seems a shocking testimony to neglect and malpractice. It included improper fencing and absence of fencing at the high-radiation dump sites at Monkey Mountain and Welcome. Even remedial action taken by AECB leaves levels at the outer boundary of Welcome above the permissible. Proper warning signs were absent, unclearly marked, or improperly located. Signs stating "this water is not safe to drink" were absent at the Port Granby site. Contamination by transportation, because of

spillage of poor loading, and improper marking of transports was noted. Various buildings in Port Hope, including the CNR and CPR loading docks, were contaminated. One private house had exposure rates at waist level outside the house of seven times the limit, and radon concentration inside the house was 200 to 400 times acceptable levels for houses. Three public schools and many private homes and some businesses had high radon levels.

The Welcome site had abnormally high readings up to 300 times maximum permissible levels at the perimeter. At the outside of the nearest buildings, readings were double normal background level. At Welcome, water samples from the various waste areas gave radium readings of 3.5 times the AECB maximum permissible limit for drinking water; at Port Granby, average readings were eleven times maximum permissible levels in the East Gorge and 178 times the MPC for radium in the West Gorge.

It should be noted that "permissible" does not mean "acceptable" and "acceptable" does not mean "desirable," although all of these words exist in legal jargon and have bio-political overtones.<sup>32</sup>

A school, St. Mary's Separate School, was discovered to have been built on contaminated fill, which was not removed until the school board, ignoring the reassurances of the AECB that the radiation posed "no immediate health hazard", closed the school.<sup>33</sup> The school was not on the tour until the WDCCG asked to be driven by the site.



There were many businesses in downtown Port Hope with signs in their windows announcing their support for Eldorado. Jake and Nettie and Jeanne went downtown to talk to some of them, and Jeanne formed the impression that "they felt they had to. It was a company town." Ernie Hildebrand was not sure that the allegiance to the company was either reluctant or enforced. His assessment was that "Most Port Hope people have responded to the controversy with an almost blind allegiance to Eldorado in order to preserve their civic pride and also their base of employment."

Their visit continued to produce the unexpected right up to the final Sunday. Ernie recalls that there was a large United Church close to where they were staying, and he stopped at the manse and talked to the pastor for a while. "The next morning we went to Church ... and they were having some kind of celebration in that church. They had a guest speaker and he had quite a message, about how Port Hope would have to deal with its decision in terms of environmental care." The guest speaker, a Toronto theologian, was silently cheered by the Warman delegation. After the service they realized some of the Eldorado people were members of the congregation. "Angus Fraser was there," Ernie said, "and he shook our hands and said, 'It's nice to see you here.' The message was so crucial that morning."

It was reported at the hearings that Eldorado had spent approximately \$52,000 on the tours, ferrying about 100 people from the Warman district to Ontario. It seems doubtful that any opinions were changed as a result of the exercise. Honour may have been satisfied by the exchange of civilities, but the tour merely served to confirm the various "players" in their positions. As Nettie Wiebe put it:

So what are these trips to Port Hope supposed to accomplish? I appreciate that they were very generous and gracious hosts. But we never doubted that. What I do doubt is whether a uranium refinery is what this or any other community really needs, given the moral and health problems there are with the whole nuclear industry. My visit to Port Hope brought some of these doubts out more clearly...<sup>34</sup>

The tour of the Port Hope refinery, complete with lab coat and protective gear, had reassured Charles Chappell but simply confirmed Peter Froese's fears. Initially he was mildly entertained by the element of masquerade:

...we were asked to put on eye protecting goggles, hard hats, rubbers and a white coat. Anybody that did not know who I was could have mistaken me for a knowledgeable doctor or scientist...What struck me right away, when we went through the plant, was the different procedures to disinfect your hands, and scan you. Right away that told me, this is dangerous stuff. And that's what they're going to put up here in our community? I just became stronger in my conviction. We don't need this kind of dangerous, poisonous thing in our community. Of course, I had moral arguments too, but this was the other side. They went hand in hand.<sup>35</sup>

Irene Hunchak, who took the same tour with members of The Informed Citizens Group in November of 1979 came home with a completely different set of impressions. She noted the people fishing off the river-

bank beside the refinery, the "good housekeeping" practices evident in all areas of the refinery, the fact that none of the townspeople they talked to had any complaints about the refinery being there. "Most of them, she wrote to the Saskatchewan Valley News, "had fathers, sons or brothers employed there."

Ms. Hunchak was reassured by arguments that working in a nuclear plant was no more dangerous than driving a car, and probably a good deal less so, "When asked about the safety of people working there, an elderly lady remarked, 'What assurance have I got that I won't be killed in a car accident this afternoon,'" a rather oblique response that implies a remarkable coolness about chance and sudden death. Hunchak quoted Isaac Asimov's observation that, in the time that nuclear plants have been in operation in the United States, 850,000 people have died due to automobile accidents, and none due to nuclear accidents. The Three Mile Island accident led to "a loud clamor for an end to the nuclear age," she wrote, while the automobile statistics "do not induce even a whisper in favour of an end to the automobile age." However, Ms. Hunchak was not leading an attack on the automobile, but an endorsement of "what Eldorado is accomplishing in Port Hope." She acknowledged that "Apparently there had been an instance of contamination of streets, driveways and housing backfill when waste material had been used in their construction, "but she assured the reader, the contamination had been cleaned up at Eldorado's expense.<sup>36</sup>

One of the sharpest contrasts with the WDCCG's view of Eldorado as corporate citizens was the report Reverend Mike Stahl of the Riverview Hutterite Colony gave the assessment panel at the hearings. "We found Port Hope one of the nicest towns we ever saw," he said "It

seemed to us that people loved their town and were proud to have an industry like the Port Hope refinery there. We could not find anyone that had anything to say against it." He conducted an extensive investigation of the various dump sites and problem areas in Port Hope, and found both citizens and the corporation very willing to talk about them and the measures taken to clear them up. They even "Just picked numbers out of the phone book," to ensure that they were not getting selected witnesses, and found that "All were willing and friendly."<sup>38</sup> The contrast with the WDCCG recollections could hardly be more complete.

Gary Boldt remembered that the trip to Port Hope was "exciting". "I couldn't believe how Eldorado would refuse to level with us at all. We'd read books and articles about how Eldorado had polluted the whole area ... Fred Knelman's book and also the Port Granby transcripts. And then we went there, we asked them about some of these things that we knew, and they just refused to acknowledge, they just sort of put them under the rug ... we had heard of this school in Port Hope that had been built on tailings, and we asked the Eldorado driver to show it to us. He said he would, and then we were half a block past it before I realized. Time after time that happened."<sup>39</sup> There was a five month gap between the two expeditions; in that time it is conceivable that the Eldorado people realized that it was more effective to show how past mistakes had been corrected than to try to conceal them altogether.

The WDCCG returned from Port Hope to face a renewed barrage of pro-refinery activities. The local town councils and business interests had been drawn into the campaign. Just before the end of April the Rosthern Board of Trade had held an "open house" with the company as co-host. In mid-May the company announced that the environmental impact statement

was almost ready to be forwarded to the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office (FEARO) for consideration. After a period of about three months for public review of the document, Andy Roake told the Energy and Community Planning on the Prairies conference being held in Regina, the way would be clear for public hearings on the project. The announcement precipitated another round of media speculation about the project, and opportunities for various groups for and against it to make statements to reporters anxious to cover all points of view.<sup>40</sup>

The local councils seized the opportunity to announce their support, and a week later George Guenther announced the formation of an entirely new group supporting Eldorado's proposal. Guenther, no longer mayor of Warman, but still active in local affairs, announced the creation of the Warman and District Informed Citizens' Group. The invention of this organization was one of the more bizzare manifestations of the Eldorado campaign. Nettie Wiebe remembered that during the Port Hope tour company officials had mentioned that a new Citizens group was forming in Warman, "which we didn't know about at the time. They didn't either, they said."

However, George Guenther was perfectly frank about the source of the impetus for the "Informed". According to his account, the new group was formed after a meeting at the end of April with Andy Roake, Gordon Burton, and Angus Fraser, a meeting arranged by Gordon Burton. Eldorado undertook to provide information, to support the "informed" element of the title, presumably, and funds for stationery and mailing. The group was conceived of primarily as an information distribution agency. The "need arose," according to Guenther, "because some people are not certain the Concerned Citizens' Group distributes information on all sides

of the issue ... The Informed Citizens' Group wants to appear impartial to the issue, neither for nor against the refinery project," he said.<sup>41</sup>

The "Informed" never developed as a membership group in the way that the "Concerneds" did, but they did act as a conduit for public information. Throughout the summer and fall of 1979 the Saskatchewan Valley News carried ads for the new group. Did you know, they demanded:

- that Eldorado will pay a grant in lieu of property taxes to Corman Park of about \$300,000 per year. This is 13 per cent of the present assessment.<sup>42</sup>
- that the Warman uranium refinery will employ 220 people with a payroll of over \$3.5 million annually. The breakdown of jobs is: operators and warehouse employees -- 70; tradesmen -- 52; technicians -- 28; storemen and guards -- 15; administration, engineering services -- 53.<sup>43</sup>
- that the main dangers of a uranium refinery are those of a chemical plant? Hydrofluoric is the most hazardous substance used. Its hazards are similar to those of chlorine.<sup>44</sup>
- that Canada has about 20 per cent of the world's known and estimated reserves of uranium ore?<sup>45</sup>
- that some 40 nations now have nuclear power programs and that there are over 200 nuclear power reactors in the western world. Another 200 are under construction,<sup>46</sup>

and so on.

The WDCCG were angry at the new group's choice of name, and not just for the obvious reason. It is true they felt it was a slur on their efforts, and a direct attempt to imply that they were biased, but

they were now so firmly fixed in the role of "official opposition" that that hardly mattered. The deepest hurt was that the choice underlined the division in the community, made it public property in a way that could only contribute to the bad feeling developing over the refinery issue. "Maybe that was inevitable," Ernie Hildebrand said, "but it wasn't necessary."<sup>47</sup>

They were also sceptical about the implied claim to be impartial. "If our information has been one-sided, theirs is likely to be even more so," Ernie said. Peter Prebble thought the new group would simply be a conduit for propaganda. "There's a big difference between a good information program and a careful plan to persuade people it [the refinery] would be good for them," he said.<sup>48</sup>

However, the WDCCG's new confidence enabled them to take most of the new developments in their stride. The RM Council's somewhat premature announcement that they were ready to pass the zoning changes necessary to facilitate construction for Eldorado was dismissed by them as merely "disappointing". Nettie Wiebe spoke for the group on this occasion, and revealed that the WDCCG were now quite confident that they could gather enough signatures to force a referendum on the issue if it appeared necessary.<sup>49</sup> The WDCCG membership which had grown so dramatically in March was still growing in mid-May, and the Group were reasonably confident that if it came to a referendum they had the numbers to win. However, they were also aware that the final power lay with the provincial planning branch, not with the rural municipality, so they were no longer anxious to get into the referendum game.

They were now considering broadening their own campaign, which had hitherto concentrated on their fears about the arms race and the

environment, to include some doubts about the economics of the project. The pressure on the local councils had made them aware that the supposed benefits to the communities in the area was a strong selling point for the project. They had shied away from confronting "the dollar issue" head on, partly because they were doubtful of their ability to compete with company propagandists in so specialized an area, especially since they would have to rely largely on company figures. It was also true that at first they took for granted that a local boom would inevitably be the by-product of the construction of a \$100 million plant. Now, they began to wonder if the effects of such a boom were likely to be all positive, and if they were likely to be as extensive as advertised.

Characteristically, their doubts were first aroused by realizing what could happen to the "little people" in an economy gripped by a boom mentality. They were haunted by the memory of a young couple from Alberta who had driven onto the farm yard where Jake and Louise Buhler, Nettie Wiebe and Jim Robbins were farming, in the summer of 1977, looking for work. Edgar Epp described the incident in a letter to the Star-Phoenix:

The young driver, who had his wife and small child with him, was looking for "the uranium mine at Warman." He was unemployed. Most of their earthly possessions were in the car with them. None of their enquiries along the way had set the facts straight for them.

That incident comes to mind whenever some businessman or politician speculates in glowing terms about the tremendous economic benefits to Warman and Saskatoon should Eldorado Nuclear build its proposed uranium refinery. That misinformed



young husband and father has a lot in common with those who hope to find a pot of gold at the end of the uranium rainbow.

A capital intensive project, such as the proposed refinery, does not bring much money into a community nor does it create a lot of jobs. The real effect it does have is to build up false hopes and to attract the transient, down and out laborers from elsewhere. A few businesses might see their sales increase, real estate, especially in the housing rentals, appears to prosper, and there is excitement and anticipation in the air for a time. Then reality strikes. Much of the money exchanging hands originated in the unemployment and welfare offices as more and more people have moved in hoping to find a job. The instability of transience and the frustration of families finding themselves on just one more dead-end road, manifests itself eventually in social and family disintegration and erupts into a crime problem.

Out of my experience as a prison administrator, I can assure the reader that this dark picture is no great exaggeration. The casualties of rapid urbanization and industrial growth are not generally visible to our respectable businessmen and politicians. They are highly visible, however, in our welfare offices, our unemployment offices, our foster homes and our jails."<sup>50</sup>

Local Council members were also encouraged to believe that there would be a direct benefit to municipal coffers if the plant were established.

The RM of Corman Park could expect to receive an additional \$250,000 to \$300,000 in annual revenues from the company, in the form of a grant in lieu of taxes, they were told. Local improvement projects, such as recreation facilities in the town of Warman, could expect to get support from the company.

The Group's response to the talk of grants was that Corman Park was a big area -- there was no reason to suppose that the local district would be particularly favoured when it came to the distribution of the largesse. Nettie Wiebe followed up on Edgar Epp's earlier attempt to reply to the economic arguments being put forward by the project supporters, after the Port Hope trip. "The mill rate there," she wrote to the editor of the Valley News, "is comparable to that of neighbouring towns of similar size, as are the town's services. The Eldorado fund has not made a major difference there it seems."<sup>51</sup>

The small towns of the area were even more likely to lose out in competition with the City of Saskatoon, Wiebe thought. Eldorado's argument was that the expenditure of one to two million dollars for local purchases every year would benefit the area immensely.

But just what do they intend to buy in Warman or Osler or Martensville? Because of our nearness to Saskatoon, our local shops will be competing with those of the city for Eldorado business as they do for other industrial purchases. You will notice that Eldorado has not located their office in Warman. Looks like we've lost the first round already in this business competition.<sup>52</sup>

The WDCCG were not alone in their doubts about the real benefits of the promised boom. While the Saskatoon Board of Trade enthusiastically supported the project, city mayor Cliff Wright was cautious, and the City Council presented no supporting brief at the hearings. The mayor was not himself opposed to the development, but he was afraid that the impact of the uranium boom to come was being oversold. "People are expecting too much" was his reaction.<sup>53</sup>

Fred Knelman gave very much the same message at a public meeting organized jointly by the SES and the Warman "Concerneds" group. When you balanced the costs and the benefits, he argued, the costs were greater.

During the hearings the provincial department of the environment also sounded a warning against great expectations. Richard Kellow from the Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Secretariat asked that Eldorado make "the employment and residency projections in the report [the EIS] well-known at the local level to ensure that the smaller communities do not over-anticipate development." He was anxious to avert the danger of "installation of excessive services."<sup>55</sup> The half-finished shopping mall in Warman that is a legacy of local business hopes is presumably the product of the kind of over-anticipation Mr. Kellow was trying to avoid.

However, there were a lot of believers, and chief among them, of course, was the Eldorado group themselves. Not just prosperity, but progress, and perhaps our whole western way of life was at stake in the decision to develop or not to develop, in the opinion of Gordon Burton, Eldorado's director of corporate affairs in Saskatoon. "Our success has been the result of the use of energy instead of manual labour and of

specialization. You just can't throw away that specialization," he said. He believed that the energy/specialization formula was the basis for "significant economic, social, educational and cultural progress, that has made society more egalitarian."<sup>54</sup>

The question of "progress" had also surfaced in the disappointing negotiation with Mike Stahl. The apparent turnabout of ordinary expectations, when the older man opts for "progress" and the younger one for the apparently conservative position, struck others as well. Gary Boldt found the whole question of conservatism and tradition versus "progress" puzzling. "It's logical that the conservative stream of Mennonite would be against the refinery" he thought, partly because they tended to be suspicious of change, and would have, in earlier times, been the people who would move away from the area if change that they could not accept were introduced. However, Gary found, many of the group thought of as "progressive" also came out in opposition to the refinery. "There was a period," he said, "especially 20 years ago, when they put away a lot of the tradition, not speaking as much German, farming in a more modern way. And there was a fear of being called 'backwards', not keeping up with the times kind of thing." "Progressive" tended to mean progressive economically, buying the newest piece of equipment. Gary wondered, then, "why people came through so strongly. I suppose it was because even though people have accepted a lot of the progress, people are still tied pretty closely to the land."

Ernie Hildebrand accounted for it in a different way. He remembered helping on his parents' farm as a boy, and learning about the atom in school. The use the modern world had made of that atom was a

travesty of the hopes for the world that had been presented to him in his textbooks 30 years previously. "I remember as a kid on a tractor, filling up, 20 gallons in the morning, top it up at noon, filling up from bulk tanks -- I'd be in my mid-teens, and I'd be trying to multiply how much I was using and all the other farmers and all the other gas tanks. Where's it all going to come from? I guess at that point I was realizing that it was not a renewable resource. In high school they told me, some day you'll buy a tractor and it'll have a small fuel cell and you'll never have to worry about diesel fuel again." If they were "conservative" in their opposition to the development in their neighbourhood, Ernie thought, it was a conservatism that wanted a renewal of the hopes for the future they had once had, rather than an acquiescence in a continuation of a modern blight.

The title the "Informeders" had chosen for their group invited confrontation, and the WDCCG were offered one they couldn't refuse. The RM Council's enthusiastic support of Eldorado's plans extended to the new group; the council made them a special project grant to bring the Port Hope story to the Warman district. Council granted \$1,000 to the "Informeders" to bring four representatives of the town to Saskatchewan to tell their story. At a public meeting in mid-June about 150 people came to hear John and Joyce Ferguson, dairy farmers in the Port Hope area, Tom Wood, a car salesman, and Jack Demill, the company's plant safety control officer at the refinery and an employee of Eldorado for 38 years, unanimously praise the benefits of having the refinery in their town. The invitation and arrangements were made through Eldorado's public relations office.<sup>56</sup>

The visit of the Port Hope citizens stimulated the WDCCG's ongoing lobby to get a hearing from the RM Council. Earlier in the year

they had started their own campaign of visiting local councils in response to Eldorado's public relations blitz. The Warman Council's response was typical. They did not change their pro-refinery stance, but had acknowledged a responsibility to change their position if it appeared that a majority of their ratepayers were opposed. The WDCCG had taken their campaign very seriously, and in late February had even talked about hiring an expert to put together a formal presentation. However, like the similar proposal to create a travelling exhibit for information meetings in the valley communities, this suggestion died without ever coming to a vote because no one could imagine where the funds were to come from. In January the bank balance had been just over three hundred dollars, and most of that had been expended bringing Jim Robbins from Calgary to the meetings with Eldorado that led to the Port Hope tour.

George Guenther was open about where the "Informeders" were getting their money, and the WDCCG felt it was only fair that they should get equal consideration. However, it seemed that the RM Council did not intend to meet with them. In mid-July, Ken Jamieson, Secretary-Treasurer of the RM, wrote to Edgar Epp that the RM councillors had agreed not to allow the WDCCG to speak with them about the refinery. The councillors were willing to receive a written submission from the group, but not to hear a delegation at a council meeting.<sup>57</sup>

The WDCCG were very disappointed at the "apparent close-mindedness" of the councillors, and declined to take up the opportunity to present a brief instead. The size of their membership (nearly 800 by early August) was in itself an argument that there was "obvious concern" in the municipality about the refinery issue, and a reason for the Council to

dialogue with the group. "A submission", Edgar wrote, "would not accomplish the purpose of open discussion." They also felt the Council was acting more like a Board of Trade than an elected body. Edgar Epp summed it up in a letter to the Council:

Your decision not to enter into such dialogue with us when other groups, notably Eldorado Nuclear are afforded that privilege, leaves us somewhat mystified. Is it fair to assume that corporate bodies have easier access to our elected representatives than do we taxpayers?<sup>58</sup>

However, the RM councillors could hardly be faulted for thinking that there was not much point to a meeting between themselves and the "Concerneds." Not only were the two groups on opposite sides of the refinery issue, but the WDCCG had only recently publicly announced that it would directly oppose any RM move to change local zoning to ease the way for Eldorado. However, it became strategically very important to the WDCCG that the RM Council's image of invulnerability be undermined. It was a campaign that would involve them until the end of the year.

By mid-July of 1979, when the Eldorado environmental impact statement on the Warman refinery project was released, both the uranium industry in the province and its opponents were accelerating the pace of their activities. The rush to develop the new mines was described as "frantic" by the press.<sup>59</sup> The term applied equally well to the campaigning for and against the refinery.

The WDCCG were busy on several fronts. They continued to demand a "matching grant" from the RM of Corman Park to support bringing speakers from Port Granby to the area, and to press the provincial and

federal governments for funds to carry on with their own projects. They responded to the continuing Eldorado campaign of ads and "open houses" in the district with their own news releases and public meetings in the small towns of the area. FEARO put in an appearance in the district, in the person of Bob Connelly, to begin organizing for the hearings, and the "Concerneds" contributed their views to the process of deciding when and where the hearings would take place, and who would participate. They continued to seek allies in the provincial community, speaking to groups in Saskatoon and elsewhere. By the end of the year they had a whole new group of co-workers, the Saskatoon Citizens for a Non-nuclear Society (SCNS) pledged not only to help in opposing the refinery but also to adopt the non-confrontational style the WDCCG preferred. As the year moved on the executive meetings came closer and closer together, and the number of people attending increased until over 20 were gathering for the final strategy sessions before the hearings. It seemed Jake Buhler was everywhere, from standing up as the lone anti-development speaker at a Saskatoon Board of Trade seminar on the issue in July, to addressing the Roman Catholic nuns of the Diocese of Saskatoon at the invitation of the diocesan synod. Speaking to the nuns, he quoted a conversation he and his wife Louise had had with Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She had told the Buhlers, "I hope you will do what you are called on to do, as I have done," Jake said.<sup>60</sup>

It was no surprise to anyone that the impact statement contracted by Eldorado to Beak Consultants of Saskatoon announced that the benefits of the refinery would outweigh the costs to the area. Edgar Epp observed that any proponent would naturally seek facts to confirm its own



opinions when trying to make a point. The positive impact statement, he feared, would tend to bias the hearings in favour of the project more than a report which remained entirely neutral. However, Ron Dakers, vice-president in charge of Eldorado's refinery division, thought that the reputation of the consultants, who were paid approximately \$800,000 for the two-year study, protected the company from the charge that the "bad news" about the impact of the proposal was simply ignored. He also argued that the company was most familiar with the process being assessed for its impact, and that much of the key information had to remain with the company rather than being released to a neutral body, because the process was one in which the company had a proprietary interest.

However, the effect of the company's argument regarding the impartiality of the study was somewhat undermined by Ron Dakers' comment that the content of the report was "just what we have been saying for a year, only more detailed."<sup>61</sup>

The whole review process itself was under scrutiny by the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council, but their interim report, which had come out in May, was not then available to the public. The report was finally available in late November, and the WDCCG then took the opportunity to voice their accumulated concerns about the whole process of carrying out an environmental review. The FEARO group had got the process backward, according to the WDCCG, and should have appointed a panel and created guidelines for the EIS before, not after, the statement was prepared. The procedure adopted had the effect of excluding public input from the impact statement, whether or not that was the intent. The control the proponent seemed to have over the process was increased by the lack of financial

support for the opposition, the WDCCG release suggested. Although they received a \$13,000 grant from the provincial Department of the Environment just before the hearings, at the beginning of December they were still unfunded, although by then they represented more than 800 people, 95% of whom lived within a 15-mile radius of the proposed location.<sup>62</sup> As Herman Boerma commented in his criticism of procedures delivered to the assessment panel members, the steps the EIS went through did not even conform to FEARO policy.<sup>63</sup> The main failing of the EIS was in its coverage of the social impact of the project. It did include a section on the "Human Environment", but only Gordon Burton argued seriously that the document was comprehensive in its coverage. "It will address all the matters that have to be addressed" he told the Star-Phoenix. All these matters included the social impact, according to Burton. However, the material on the "human environment" was confined to numbers -- of people, of services, of jobs, of tax dollars, of land use categories, building lots, and so on. It ignored social, cultural or religious values, lifestyles and history in its assessment of the "human environment".<sup>64</sup>

With the EIS available the next step was the establishment of a panel and a decision on hearing dates. Eldorado were confident their application would be successful, and outlined the procedure as they saw it. Andy Roake predicted hearings within three or four months, time enough, he thought, for all concerned to prepare critiques for presentation to a panel. The next stage for Eldorado, assuming a favourable report from the panel, would be application for various licenses and permits, from the AECB, from the province, and from the local council. Assuming the northern mines being so hastily developed could provide the yellowcake for refining,

the plant could be in operation by 1982, Roake thought.<sup>65</sup> In the meantime the provincial government was anxious to promote the notion that economic conditions in the province were favourable to investment. It cooperated with the City of Saskatoon to co-sponsor a resources conference organized by the Financial Post, held in Saskatoon on the 29th and 30th of August, 1979. The magazine's conference department had held a number of such regional economic conferences across Canada, and the Saskatoon conference attracted 600 delegates. The conference was intended to promote an interest in the potential for resource development both within the Saskatchewan business community and outside it.<sup>66</sup>

The enthusiastic union apparently being forged between the business and financial community and the provincial government alarmed the opponents of nuclear development. The NDP Government under Alan Blakeney was eager to prove that capitalists and socialists could work together on development projects. The Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation (SMDC) established some years earlier was proving, according to mineral resources Minister Jack Messer, that free enterprise capital and government funding could work together in establishing joint ventures. Most of the minister's, and the government's attention, was directed to persuading the "free-enterprisers" that the union would work, but there was a constituency on the other end of the political spectrum that also needed convincing too. Opponents of nuclear development in particular doubted that the government could act as a developer and a regulator too. Activities at the Key Lake uranium property, where SMDC and Uranertz each held a 50 per cent interest seemed to validate these fears. It had been revealed in the spring of 1979 that although no mining permit had been issued and no

hearings as yet held, there had been extensive drainage of lakes and large areas of bush had been cleared for site development. Messer argued that the lake drainage was necessary for effective exploration, but admitted that "some of the things are going perhaps a bit farther than they should." Apparently people on-site were making decisions on the assumption that mining would proceed. It appeared that the formula bringing together government development and free enterprise capital still needed a little work.<sup>67</sup>

The WDCCG had already expressed their doubts about this union at the Cluff Lake Inquiry, and made an exception to their usual rule of avoiding mass demonstrations to officially participate in one planned to protest the Financial Post resources conference. The protest rally itself was a low key affair, with almost the atmosphere of a family picnic, complete with children and dogs and folk singing. Estimates of attendance ranged from 300 to 400 to 850, depending on who was counting. A number of church groups, native groups and anti-nuclear organizations participated.<sup>68</sup> Out of this group emerged a coalition, brought together by the original organizer of the rally, Anne Smart, a local librarian later (1986) elected as an NDP member of the legislature. The coalition, which provided a good deal of support to the WDCCG called itself Saskatoon Citizens for a Non-nuclear Society (SCNS) eventually represented more than 30 local churches and organizations.<sup>69</sup> Most importantly for the WDCCG, the SCNS undertook to adopt among its members the low key, nonconfrontational style of making a case to the panel that the members of the WDCCG favoured.

It was the beginning of September before the advance man for FEARO, Bob Connelly, appeared to make arrangements and get community

opinion on hearings dates and locations. In his first contacts with local groups he told people no dates could be set until a panel was appointed, but in mid-September he announced that the hearings would be held in January. The dates represented a compromise between the Eldorado preference for a fall set of meetings, which would have conflicted with the harvest period, and the preference for an early spring date on the part of the WDCCG and others.<sup>70</sup>

The panel was not named until the following month, when it was announced that John Klenavic would chair a seven-man panel. He had also chaired the four previous hearings for refineries in Ontario that had been held for Eldorado proposals, one of which had been the Port Granby hearing. The other panel members included Reg Lang of York University, an environmental expert, sociologist Allan Olmsted of the University of Calgary, zoologist Dave Scott of the federal fisheries and oceans department office in Winnipeg, Kim Shikaze of the Ontario environment office in Toronto, Glen Beck of the University of Saskatchewan economics department and Don Rennie, head of the University of Saskatchewan soil science department. The three western members were new appointees; the other four men had served previously.

The WDCCG hoped the hearings would be held in Warman, but the town hall was not large enough, according to Connelly, to hold even the panel and its recording equipment, let alone the audience that was expected, and the high school was unwilling to tie up the gymnasium, the only other "hall" large enough, for three weeks. They turned to Martensville, where the hearings were accommodated in the town auditorium. It, too, was used for a school physical education program, but the school principal, Jake Buhler, was willing to accommodate the hearings.

The WDCCG also hoped that the panel would travel to other small towns in the area, but the hearings were confined to a week in Saskatoon and two weeks in Martensville. The compromise on the hearing dates which had been effected meant that local people would be travelling to them in the middle of the prairie winter, when the coldest temperatures of the year could be expected.

No one from the area immediately affected by the proposal was appointed to the panel, but the panel took an unusual step a little more than a month after its appointment in mid-September when it elected to hear David Schroeder from the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Dr. Schroeder teaches theology and philosophy at the college. Bob Connelly set up the preliminary meeting to inform the panel about the background of the Mennonites in the area, on the recommendation of the WDCCG.

As well as giving some of the historical background of the group in the Warman area, Dr. Schroeder attempted to explain to the panel the perspective they might expect the local people to have on the issue before them. "To resort to procedures of individual decision rather than corporate decision is already a violation of a community or a people," he told them. "Secondly," he said, "we should notice that through this history there is a basic assumption that the Christian faith encompasses all of life. ...The faith is expressed through the very institutions of the community and the structure of the community. Thus questions of technology, economics and social structure cannot really be separated in their minds. ...Thirdly, where there has been a real difference between the actions of a government and their own convictions, their loyalty has been to God together with a willingness to suffer what penalties the state might inflict." In addition, Dr. Schroeder told the panel, the local people believe "it is not right to

inflict a debt upon the next generation that we are not willing to face ourselves." Moreover, the Mennonites have always been against war, and Dr. Schroeder felt that no amount of assurance that the product of the refinery would be for "peaceful" purposes would persuade them. Also they were and are people "with a mind of conservation and making productive the land."<sup>71</sup>

However, the lift this October 25 hearing with Dave Schroeder gave the WDCCG was offset shortly after by the first batch of briefs to be received by the panel. By November 9 they had received 13 preliminary briefs and comments on the proposal and the impact statement, only one of which opposed the project. Warman Town Council, the RM of Corman Park and the Warman and District Informed Citizens Group supported the project, providing that safety regulations were adhered to. Much of the support for the project in these early briefs was of this qualified nature. A plant inventory should be taken first, one submission recommended, the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment wanted more on transporting hazardous materials to and from the plant, public health was a concern to the rural health medical officer, the Saskatchewan Institute of Pedology (soil science) questioned putting the plant in a dairy region. Three federal government departments in effect promised approval -- the Atomic Energy Control Board (on which the plant would depend for licensing), Environment Canada and Energy Mines and Resources Canada.<sup>72</sup> The odds looked heavily stacked against the opponents of the proposal, and there was only a little over a month to go before the "real" hearings.

About this time two events in eastern Canada gave some unexpected support to the critics of the refinery proposal. One directly concerned Eldorado Nuclear's reputation as a "corporate citizen". In November the Ontario government charged the company with polluting the Port Hope harbour.



Raffinate had spilled into the lake from a catchment basin which overflowed when a hose broke during a truck filling procedure. The spill had taken place in December of 1978, and had contaminated the harbour with both radioactive and chemical pollutants from the tailings of the refining process.<sup>73</sup> Earlier in the year Eldorado had been blamed for air pollution due to chemical emissions from the Port Hope refinery which had allegedly led to a variety of symptoms, choking, eye irritations, loss of sense and taste.<sup>74</sup> The other event was the Mississauga train derailment, which highlighted the dangers of transporting chemicals. On November 11, 1979 a derailment at a crossing in the heart of Mississauga, Ontario, caused propane cars to explode, which in turn threatened to precipitate the escape of deadly chlorine gas. Nearly a quarter of a million people were evacuated in fourteen hours from the sprawling conurbation on the north-western edge of Toronto, and it was six days before residents could return to their homes.<sup>75</sup> Opponents of the Warman proposal had already expressed concern about the dangers inherent in transporting chemicals, whether by rail or road. The Mississauga derailment provided a vivid illustration of the potential dangers, and was referred to frequently during the hearings.

Meanwhile, funding was still a problem, and the ongoing lobby to get a matching grant out of the RM of Corman Park Council became something more than a push for fair play. An appeal to the Council in August to accept a meeting with the executive of the WDCCG, with no discussion, had been turned down. Jake Buhler conceived of an alternative approach, and the October annual ratepayers meeting at the RM offices found him in the role of an RM ratepayer proposing a resolution asking council to "spend an equivalent amount of money to bring in persons from the Port Hope area



to tell the facts and hazards" of the refinery. Jake's resolution passed, 38 to 24, and the Council was committed.

However, the Council was no more anxious than it had been to pass on \$1,000 to the WDCCG to aid them in their fight against Eldorado Nuclear. They deferred dealing with the application for the grant at the November meeting, pending receiving further information from the Group about their plans.

Edgar Epp's November plea to the Council in November was that "The 'Informed' Citizens Group was highly selective in choosing pro-nuclear development persons to be flown into our area at ratepayer's expense. In fairness to the ratepayers, we should like to balance the information scale somewhat by bringing in persons whose testimony may differ from that which Eldorado Nuclear would want us to hear."<sup>76</sup>

He wrote again after the November deferral to provide the additional information requested. The meeting, he told the secretary, would take place on December 1st at the Warman High School.<sup>77</sup> In the meantime, the group went ahead with their arrangements, as the actual time for the hearings was now drawing close. On December 1 they held their meeting with four visitors from the Port Granby citizens' group. Four hundred people came to hear their story. If numbers counted the WDCCG could argue that the public had "voted" for their version of the Port Hope refinery story in a ratio of 8 to 3, comparing the turnout of 150 at the earlier Port Hope citizens' meeting organized by the "Informed".

In retrospect it certainly seems that the large turnout could have been taken as a warning to the proponents that local attention to the hearings would be very different from the experience of the local

hearings of the Cluff Lake Inquiry nearly three years previously.

The Port Hope delegation sponsored by the WDCCG included Pat Lawson, a homemaker, and John Veldhuis, a school principal. They had been the leaders of Save our Environment from Atomic Pollution (SEAP), founded in 1976 to fight a proposal to build a refinery in a tobacco field opposite the Veldhuis home. Their fight had been successful, based largely on the issue of environmental safety and the inappropriateness of building a refinery in an agricultural area. However they had lost the next round, and Eldorado was able to get approval for a site 5 km closer to Port Hope in the same year (1978) that their first application was turned down.

Still, the pro-development majority on the RM Council held out as long as they could. At the December meeting, nearly two weeks after the public meeting had been held, the councillors voted three times before the grant was approved. They first turned down the WDCCG application by a vote of 7 to 4. However, Carol Teichrob, one of the councillors who had voted to approve the grant (and later Reeve of the RM) pointed out that Council was bound by the ratepayers' resolution, and on a motion by Peggy McKercher, who had also been in favour, Council voted to reconsider the proposal.

The final vote was unanimously in favour, but there was no comfort for the WDCCG in their victory. Those who had supported the grant application had done so as a matter of principle, not because of any reconciliation with the WDCCG's views. Don Glazier, who voted for the grant from the beginning, criticized the December 1 public meeting. It

was "one-sided" he thought, and didn't do justice to the ratepayers in attendance. Other council members were more openly hostile to the "Concerneds" delegation. Henry Driedger questioned their membership claims, and Eugene Waldner thought that the councillors should get the \$1,000 for showing up at an anti-nuclear meeting which was "pretty hard to take."<sup>78</sup>

It was more painful in that all of this wrangling went on more or less in public. The WDCCG response to Eldorado's public relations campaign had been as effective as they could wish, and everything the group did was now "news". Their increasingly acrimonious encounters with the Corman Park Council had been followed closely by one of the two dailies in the province, the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.

When Corman Park Council announced its readiness to rezone to accommodate Eldorado's plans as soon as application was made, the WDCCG were automatically canvassed for their response. Their reaction to George Guenther's announcement of the creation of the "Informeders" was covered on the same page of the local daily. When Eldorado announced the release of the EIS, Gary Boldt remembers, the local CBC television station arranged an interview with him and Edgar Epp in the Martensville cafe, to get the WDCCG response in a carefully staged atmosphere of informality. Even when they weren't actually doing something, their plans and opinions were news. Their persistence alone might have gained them their own media spotlight, but they hadn't left it to chance. By 1979 the "news release" was a regular part of their repertoire and they had lost no time letting the media know that their March appeal to the membership had led to a 300% increase in their numbers in approximately three weeks. The short two-paragraph news release tied the increase directly to Eldorado's heightened PR campaign.<sup>79</sup> It attracted a good deal of attention for the WDCCG, and

confirmed their role as the "official opposition" to the refinery in subsequent media coverage, a role that had already been tacitly acknowledged by the company itself.

This semi-official role, and the media preference for getting "both sides" of a story in the interest of objectivity meant that the WDCCG had a degree of access to local mass communications remarkable for a small, entirely volunteer group with no public funding. However, it also meant that their access was controlled by media perceptions of their adversarial role. That role made it hard for them to get more than the negative aspects of their message across. It was clear what they were against; it was seldom clear from the media coverage what they were for.

It was also more convenient for the media to present them simply as "the Mennonites" against the nuclear industry, an oversimplification that displeased Mennonites who did not support their actions. Gary Boldt remembered that "some people around here were annoyed with the fact that -- I don't know if we implied it or whether the press did -- that we supposedly represented all the Mennonite people, or all the people in the community. I think we were always careful to say that we weren't, that we spoke for our members, but sometimes the media just picked it up and said, 'This group of people here, the Mennonites, oppose this refinery...'" And there remained, always, the people who felt, as Gary put it, that "by raising a ruckus we were giving them a bad name." As the year wore on in what became for the group an increasingly hectic countdown to the hearings, some of these confrontations over identity and who the group represented became very uncomfortable indeed.

They were, however, nothing new for Mennonites. The tendency to division has its roots in Christian tradition, Wilf Buhler commented.

"In the General Conference of Mennonites, you know, each church can take their own stand, just about. Sort of a priesthood of all believers, I guess. It tends to split us on some things some times." It makes it painful, sometimes, for churches, he commented. The divisions arising from congregational differences brought the WDCCG into direct conflict with one Mennonite church in the nearby City of Saskatoon. An exchange of letters between Jake Buhler and Norman Bartel, pastor of the Mayfair Mennonite Church in Saskatoon illustrate how deeply felt these divisions were. Jake's and the pastor's exchange arose over the December 1 press conference the WDCCG had called to introduce the SEAP visitors to the media. Jake had phoned the church to ask permission to hold the press conference there, and at second hand had received a message apparently granting permission. However, the message was in error, and the pastor was not pleased to find a media "event" taking place in his church. Jack wrote:

Perhaps my failure to speak with you personally was an error. Perhaps it was a lack of explanation of what our group -- WDCCG -- is all about. Privately may I say that in my struggle to understand what implications a nuclear refinery has for me, I spend much time in intense communication with God. To be placed near my home and within an area where Mennonites live, the refinery has the potential to erode values for many years to come. Federal hearings will be held in January. May I ask that as a fellow believer you prayerfully remember us in this difficult matter.<sup>80</sup>

It was a disagreement between friends, as Bartel's reply makes clear, but a deep difference of opinion for all of that:

...Internally ... we want to strive to be the kind of assembly of God's people that He intends for us to be. This is no easy matter since all too often we end up seeking to build God's kingdom from human perspectives, rather than divine intents. ...

There are many good and worthy things to which we could be giving our energy and attention. ...The whole nuclear issue is one which has both positive and negative implications. Though I realize that you are deeply involved in this particular issue, I am not prepared to suggest that this become a priority issue for our church to pursue. If this could be the means which would help to introduce persons to a living and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I could see myself open to a greater extent to its promotion. This does not exclude individuals from spending some of their energies in this direction and at some point we need, as a church, to speak to the questions at stake.<sup>81</sup>

Another issue entered the picture at this point which increased the tension, and that was a further complication in the land use element of the debate over the refinery location. In May of 1979 the provincial government had passed legislation bringing the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) into being. The authority had sweeping powers to create a protected zone for park and recreational use on both sides of the South Saskatchewan River from Clark's Crossing north of the City of Saskatoon to a point near Pike Lake Provincial Park south of the city, a stretch of river that

included the proposed Warman refinery site. World renowned architect and planner Raymond Moriyama had been retained to produce a "hundred year plan" for protecting and developing the area. The City of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan and the RM of Corman Park all agreed to the introduction of the legislation and to cooperate with the plan.

The councils had passed approval for participation in the plan without much debate, rather in the spirit of approving a "motherhood" issue. There was no opposition on the RM Council, where Councillor Peggy McKercher was also chairman of the Meewasin Authority. The powers of the authority included the right of first refusal in particularly sensitive zones close to the river, designated "control" zones, which meant that any change in land ownership or land use close to the river would have to be approved by the Authority, and the MVA could disallow a transaction, or insist on buying the land itself.

These powers appeared to be far too great to certain landowners in the RM, who began to lobby vociferously in the late fall for a curtailment of the Authority's scope. Wally Hamm, a local landowner, founded the Riveredge Heritage Association to fight the "imposition" of the MVA plan, and to defend his "fundamental" rights as a landowner.

At the same time opponents of the refinery proposal found new ammunition to the purposes of the MVA. Louise Buhler argued the issue before a special meeting of Saskatoon City Council to hear statements on the refinery, and took the Corman Park Council to task as well:

It is disconcerting that the Saskatchewan Government, Saskatoon City Council and Corman Park Municipal Council (all of whom have morally, legally and financially committed themselves to the MVA) support Eldorado Nuclear Ltd., in

their proposal for a uranium refinery to be situated in one of the recreational nodes of the Meewasin Valley Project.

...Even more disturbing is the fact that the chairperson of MVA has publicly supported Eldorado's bid for an industrial development in a priority MVA area.<sup>82</sup>

The area that Louise Buhler was concerned about was called Cathedral Bluffs, and was intended to be a major year-round recreational "node" in the overall plan. The MVA had submitted a preliminary brief to the panel in November, but had confined itself to outlining the MVA regulations that would have to be complied with. To accommodate the MVA the company had changed the location of the site of the plant by about 250 m, out of the MVA control zone and into a "buffer" zone with less restricting controls on it.

Buhler wondered if this move entitled the citizens to question the credibility of the Authority. "Is MVA out to protect Eldorado or are they interested in protecting the heritage, people and beauty of this part of the river?" she asked. The change left the plant location still in the middle of the designated recreational area.

There were a number of other speakers developing the same theme at the special session on the refinery issue of the Saskatoon city council held in December. The business community, represented by the Saskatoon Board of Trade and the Saskatoon Industrial Development Board, were in favour of the development, but the majority of the briefs heard by the city council were against the refinery, mainly on environmental grounds. The council delayed its decision, and finally decided to make no decision. After a second special session the councillors were still divided on the issue, and no brief went forward from the council to the FEARO panel.



The battle for Saskatoon City Council's commitment was a genteel affair compared with the scene that took place during the final meeting of the Corman Park Council before the hearings. Verne Clemence of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix had described the meeting in the city as a "rare moment of communication", with some "exceptionally rational and sincere presentations" to which the councillors paid the compliment of listening closely.<sup>83</sup> Nearly 600 people came to the RM meeting, most of them to protest the RM's participation in the MVA plans. The meeting was rowdy and noisy. "It was a circus", Glen Grismer recalled. Newly appointed to the Authority staff, and a recent graduate of the local university's planning program, he had been sent to the meeting to explain the application of the MVA's powers and plan in the area. "I just stopped even trying to talk" he remembered. Jake Buhler feared the fight would be carried to the hearings, which were to commence in less than a week from the January 3rd meeting of the Council. He was sufficiently concerned to circulate "An Open Letter" to the members of the WDCCG and others commenting on the meeting and asking for restraint during the meetings with the FEARO panel. He wrote:

The ratepayers of Corman Park RM met on January 3, 1980 to discuss a contentious matter. What resulted was an unfortunate and undignified evening. The proceedings were marred with catcalls, namecalling, and insults far beyond what is benefitting our citizenry.

If there are differences at the hearings, and there will be, we urge all persons to state their opinions with determination but with the consideration for human dignity. It should be remembered that the way in which anything is said

reflects the true character of the one who is speaking.<sup>84</sup>

The letter ended with a direct plea to John Klenavic, the chairman of the FEARO panel, to control the proceedings "at all times".

## FOOTNOTES

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20. Ibid., loc. cit.
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60. SP, 17 December 1979, "Nuns urged to become involved in debate."
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75. SP, 17 November 1979, "Ordeal ends in Mississauga."
76. Edgar Epp to K. H. Jamieson, Secretary-Treasurer, the RM of Corman Park #344, 13 November 1979.
77. Edgar Epp to K. H. Jamieson, Secretary-Treasurer, the RM of Corman Park #344, 23 November 1979.
78. SP, 11 December 1979, "Anti-nuclear grant approved."
79. WDCCG News Release, 28 March 1979.
80. Jake Buhler to Reverend Norman Bartell, 3 December 1979.
81. Norman Bartell to Jake Buhler, 14 December 1979, "Not just a difference over tactics, but a real division of opinion over the whole question of protest and community goals."
82. Louise Buhler, Letter to "Sask. Valley News," SVN "Letter Box," 13 December 1979.
83. SP, 26 December, Column, "Verne Clemence."
84. Jake Buhler, "An Open Letter," to all members of Warman District Concerned Citizens Group, et al., 4 January 1980.

## 6. THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

In some ways its ironic that hearings aroused such agonies of effort and anxiety among participants. As the panel chairman made clear, they were not even "hearings" in the legal sense, but only public meetings. Eldorado as a crown corporation is exempt from the requirements of the Environmental Assessment and Review process established by the federal cabinet in the early '70s. The corporation was not legally obliged to submit an environmental impact assessment to the panel, nor to appear before it. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and the recommendations of the panel were not binding. All of this was made very clear by the panel chairman John Klenavic.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the opponents of the project seized the opportunity to state their objections one more time, and the drama of revelation and confrontation was played out in an atmosphere of serious intensity. The chairman repeated his observations on the non-binding nature of the deliberations and of the panel's recommendations at the opening of each session.

Professor Leo Driedger, a sociologist at the University of Manitoba, who appeared as an expert witness for the WDCCG, recalled that even the physical arrangements for seating participants contributed to an environment of confrontation, and, possibly, intimidation. He credited Eldorado Nuclear Ltd. with "creating a formal intimidating environment for opponents, by placing four permanent representatives at a table immediately to the left of the head table, where the seven federal panel representatives were located."<sup>2</sup> Not only were the representatives of the company thus prominently a part of the "setting", whether by their own arrangement or due to the provisions of the panel itself, but they also played a large part in the questioning of those who presented briefs to the panel.

Driedger believed that the space was "structured to intimidate opponents."<sup>3</sup> The table provided for those making presentations was "at the very end, on the right, farthest removed from the panel (about twenty-five feet), placed after the secretaries, and recorders (symbolically the most inferior position). The spatial setting implied that Eldorado was in a strong position, while opponents were in the last place." He felt that the television lights and the reporters present also unnerved speakers.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the motivation for the arrangements, some of them did cause a good deal of friction and were protested by some speakers, especially those opposed to the project. The panel allowed the company to question speakers, and this became an especially sore point, one that was exacerbated as it became apparent that far more people were coming forward to make statements than could be accommodated. By the last week of the hearings speakers were refusing to answer questions from Eldorado representatives, defending their action by claiming they were thus "saving time" for other speakers.

Ernie Hildebrand was moved to protest Eldorado's dominant position as early as the second day of the hearings. By this time the pattern of allowing the company time at the beginning of each session to make an opening statement, and their steady questioning of adverse statements, was clearly apparent. Stung by Ron Dakers' (vice-president, refining) dismissal of a demonstration of breadbaking using the television lights to power a solar oven as "theatre" designed to produce a "gut reaction to issues more than an intellectual reaction."<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand leaped to his feet in spontaneous protest. He began in a characteristically low key style, observing "that he was a little bit worried about some of



the things that are happening here." He commented on the implications of the physical set up, noting that there were "no tables for some citizen's group to sit at," even though they had comments to make as well. But it was the practice of allowing Eldorado a "rebuttal" after each speaker, or group of speakers, that drew from him a flash of genuine rebuke.

...I don't think it is fair, Mr. Chairman, if you allow Eldorado to respond to all these and then that is the final word. You need them to turn to the audience and ask any questions from the audience.<sup>6</sup>

Hildebrand's acknowledgement that such a procedure would "take a lot of time" gave John Klenavic time to air some of his own frustration:

Mr. Hildebrand, I would also point out that we have been asking groups such as yours for a number of months to put in a combined brief that would allow time for questioning.<sup>7</sup>

"Time" became the stick with which each side beat the other in dispute over how the hearings were to be conducted. On this occasion, Hildebrand reminded Klenavic of the WDCCG's earlier request to hold off hearings until March, and their warning that the hearings, whenever they were held, should provide enough time in the schedule to allow everyone who wished to speak "because we don't see this only as a hearing but we see this as a vote."<sup>8</sup>

John Klenavic had included in his opening remarks a general invitation to participate. "We like to allow right up to the last minute for people to have their briefs ready and to make statements" he assured the public. However, this procedure had inherent in it a disadvantage which he also noted: "this does not really provide us with an opportunity

to determine how many speakers we can expect or how long they intend to speak."<sup>9</sup> Mr. Klenavic's caution was prophetic, and the scheduling was in trouble almost immediately. On the evening of the first day's sessions he commented, as he had in the morning, that it was not necessary for speakers to use all of the 15 minute limit allowed them, and added, "In fact, this evening it will be very difficult if everyone does."<sup>10</sup> The panel was already considering increasing the number of sessions. The second day of the meetings the chairman announced that two new sessions were being added towards the end of the original schedule (an additional 10 hours of meetings) to accommodate the waiting list already built up, and "any who have not registered and may have been overwhelmed by the large list that is already available."<sup>11</sup>

The panel were very nearly overwhelmed themselves, and part way through the proceedings attempted once again to get the WDCCG to submit one big brief on behalf of its members. In spite of the -40° weather the hall in Martensville was packed day after day with people who had come to speak, and people who came simply to witness the proceedings. After the first week (the schedule was one week in Martensville, the second in Saskatoon, and the third and final week back in Martensville) the panel met with the WDCCG executive to ask for some help in stemming the flood of speakers. Klenavic's feeling was that the panel had heard the community's point of view, and that continued repetition would only wear everyone out without adding to the panel's stock of information.

The panel apparently believed that it was largely WDCCG pressure that was creating the steady stream of appearances and that if the WDCCG could be persuaded to change their tactics the pressure would

ease up. The WDCCG did not actually have the "puppet master's" control over its membership that the panel appeared to credit them with, but they were certainly a powerful factor in influencing the number of people who braved the television lights and the atmosphere of the meetings to make a statement.

"Our thinking was, this is the only ballot we're going to get. Let's get as many people to speak against it as we possibly can. So we kept inviting people and we kept adding to the list, and they kept saying, 'The list is all full,'" Ernie Hildebrand recalled.

The panel asked the WDCCG to call a halt, Edgar Epp remembered. They said, 'We've heard you, there's no need to get everybody.' At that point we thought maybe we're pushing our point too much. But we had a meeting with Herman Boerma and were advised very strongly, 'If you quit now you're doing what they would like you to do, and that's to shut up.'"

Their wavering was partly due to a genuine sympathy for the men who were suffering the effects of the relentless daily pressure. Ruth Buhler remembers feeling sorry for the panelists finally. "They looked so sad, and so haggard and so sleepless. People who knew what was going on said that they spent the entire night after that first evening strategizing, because they were just totally floored. They had never been in contact with such an opposition group before. They seemed to have a feeling for what they were up against."

However, the panel was by no means unanimous in their desire to limit participation. In fact the attempt made one of the Saskatchewan appointees on the panel very angry. Glen Beck, a professor of economics from the University of Saskatchewan, recalled:

When the panel started out we discussed our procedures. Several of us knew nothing about their past procedures or past performance prior to this point. I made the observation to them that the Saskatchewan community was different. If you sit down and have open hearings here you're going to be overwhelmed. It's a politically active province, and we are interested in social issues, and we've already had several inquiries into this and it's been a subject of intense political debate. So that if we walk in saying that we're going to listen to everybody and anybody without any picking, we'll be just swamped. And if you do this, once you've gone in, it's too late to change the rules of the game, because it's self-serving.

They had held their hearings in previous places and literally had to go round with all those PR types drumming people up to come out. They found out. It was no surprise to me.

In the end 22 sessions were conducted by the panel, and a total of 347 speakers appeared before them. Leo Driedger calculated that 75 per cent of the speakers were against the proposal. The number of speakers was almost equally divided between Saskatoon and Martensville. Although the panel sat in Martensville for two of the three weeks, there were only four more sessions there than in Saskatoon, and one of these was a special session scheduled to hear Eldorado's rationale for the project. Although the panel had the impression of being swamped by a wave of Mennonite opposition, by Driedger's calculation less than half the speakers in Martensville were actually Mennonite (80 out of 175) and only 5 of the

speakers in Saskatoon (out of 172) were Mennonite. Thus only about one-quarter of those appearing before the panel were actually from the Mennonite community, and almost all of these were from the rural area, with virtually no representation from the Mennonite community in the City of Saskatoon. While the WDCCG resisted identification with the Mennonite community, rural or urban, both because many of their supporters were from outside that community (or communities) and because they could not and would not claim to be speaking for Mennonites generally but only for their own membership, the "ethnic census" is nevertheless a useful rough guide to the Group's degree of direct influence on appearances before the panel. John Klenavic's attempt to negotiate a limit to the number of appearances was based on an assumption that many, if not most, of the "antis" speaking in Martensville were doing so at the request of the WDCCG. On the second day of the meetings in Martensville Ron Dakers, Eldorado's vice-president of refining, referred to the "175 witnesses Mr. Buhler has arranged to appear before this panel."<sup>12</sup> He was defending Eldorado against the imputation of secrecy in their dealings that had been made by some of the speakers who had already appeared before the panel. Part of his defence was simple denial: "Since we announced the purchase of options on property near Warman in October 1976, we have conducted our affairs in a goldfish bowl."<sup>13</sup> The other part of his defence was the suggestion that the many voices of criticism were in fact a single voice, orchestrated and conducted by the WDCCG. Jake Buhler, however, declined to take credit for "summoning 175 people."<sup>14</sup> He thought 75 would be more accurate. "Within that 75 perhaps 60 were 'flown in' by our group." he told the panel.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Buhler was using the phrase "flown in" metaphonically. The WDCCG actually did fly in a number of experts, including Leo Driedger from Winnipeg and Gordon

Edwards from Montreal, but the total number of "outside" speakers for the WDCCG did not exceed a half-dozen. The number of speakers is not in itself an accurate reflection of "pro" and "anti" feeling in any case, because of the structure of the meetings. A company man spoke at nearly every session, and one session, a special one in Martensville on the justification for the project, consisted entirely of company representatives. Driedger calculates that half of the 90 briefs supporting the project were presented by Eldorado employees (19 briefs) and government representatives (27). The result of this distribution was that the "pro" representation was apparently higher at the Martensville sittings (30%) than in Saskatoon (22%). Removing the Mennonite briefs and those of other church groups (15) from the roster of opposition statements, Driedger found that the remaining 159 were from a variety of backgrounds -- farmers, dairymen, professionals, some businessmen, labourers, politicians, housewives, young people, and representatives of peace groups and environmentalists. "It was a grassroots community effort which surprised the federal panel and Eldorado Nuclear. They had not seen such an organized grassroots opposition before."<sup>16</sup>

The panels' attempts to manage public response simply increased fears in the community that they would not be heard, and provoked greater efforts to convince them of the extent of the opposition to the refinery. One of these efforts was a petition presented at the last session of the meetings by Ben Buhler and Cornie (Cornelius) Guenther, on behalf of 258 farm families in the area. The possibility of a joint brief from the farm community had been discussed at a strategy meeting held in the Osler Town Hall in December. However, no action was taken until, as Ben Buhler told the panel, "two weeks ago we learned from our panel chairman that he would

encourage us to get together to make statements. This, he said, would save time for discussion and allow vor more questions. We have done just that."<sup>18</sup> Wilf Buhler, Ben's brother and partner in a dairy farm just outside Warman, remembered afterward that there was a real fear that they would not be heard at all. "They were finally saying they were going to disallow everybody to talk, and we should all get together and speak with one voice."

To some extent the Buhler's response was also part of a last-minute wave of support for the WDCCG position that surged up as the panel meetings approached. By the time that the panel held their first sessions membership in the WDCCG was closer to 900 than to 800, as more and more people came forward to add their names to the roll of opponents. In spite of their close connection with Jake Buhler (the three men are brothers) Wilf and Ben did not commit themselves until the time for action had come.

Wilf remembered, "I guess I can sheepishly say I was slow to be converted, in a lot of ways. You tend to half-believe the energy scare and all that stuff, until you find out the facts." But, he said, "I found myself glued to the radio the times I couldn't get to the meetings. Because Ben was out doing the petition I had to milk alone for about three days while he was signing up all these guys." Knowing his own feelings, Wilf was amazed at the wave of support for the WDCCG effort at the hearings. His brother's campaign to sign up farmers was nearly 100% successful. "I would have thought that half of them at least would have accepted the government line -- we're running out of energy and this is good for our community, it's jobs and everything else." Yet, Ben told the panel, only three of the 78 farmers he spoke to personally refused to sign the petition

against the refinery, two because they were in favour of it, and one "because he said we should not go against the government."<sup>18</sup>

Wilf Buhler also remembered that he developed a strong sense of the inequity of the relative positions of the farmers and Eldorado during this period. "I thought of Eldorado quite a bit when I was out milking 24 hours a day while Ben was doing this," he said drily. He wondered about the big salaries the Eldorado people were getting and the "500 bucks a day plus expenses" that the company paid some of their expert witnesses, while Ben Buhler and Cornie Guenther and their colleagues were out on the road in -40° weather on their own time and at their own expense.

The inequity in expenditure when it came to making a case to the panel was pointed out by many who came before them. Eldorado spent \$800,000 on their EIS. The WDCCG received no funds until December 1979, when the provincial Department of the Environment granted them \$13,000 to assist them to prepare a brief. They were able to reimburse some of the people who represented them at the hearings for out-of-pocket expenses, but they were never in a position to produce the "one big brief", the counterpart of the proponent's EIS, that the Chairman John Klenavic kept asking for.

Eldorado showed no sign of expecting the opposition that was in store for them when they made their opening statement on January in Martensville. Ron Dakers spoke for the company, reviewing the process by which the Warman site had been selected, and confidently setting forth the reasons the company felt made the project a good one. It would actually be more economical at the present time for Eldorado to expand its new Hope Township facilities, rather than build new ones in Saskatchewan, he told the panel, but the company was confident that with two new mines being



developed in northern Saskatchewan, and more expected in the near future they could "forgo any intermediate financial advantage from expanding the new Ontario plant."<sup>19</sup> Building in Saskatchewan would of course benefit the provincial economy, and would conform to the policy of the Saskatchewan government to encourage the processing of raw materials within its borders.<sup>20</sup> He asserted that the plant would be safe, both in terms of emissions and transportation of chemicals, and revealed that the company had decided to solve the waste problem by having it trucked back up to the northern mines for recycling and disposal.<sup>21</sup> As the plant compound would occupy only about 35 acres of "unimproved Crown Rangeland," and was unlikely to attract other industries requiring large amounts of land, it would not represent a significant intrusion into the agricultural landscape.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Daker's most astonishing statement, however, was his final defence of the project -- that there was a strong base of local support in the region for the refinery. He listed some local supporters, acknowledging that they had expressed only "general support, with conditions". To anyone familiar with the skirmishes that had gone on between the proponents of the project and its opponents in the preceding four years, the list was hardly an impressive one. It consisted of the "Town of Warman, the RM of Corman Park, the Saskatoon Board of Trade, the North Saskatchewan Business Association, and the Warman and District Informed Citizens Group."<sup>23</sup> It was already clear that the councils could speak only for the council members and not for the municipalities as a whole.<sup>24</sup> The "Informed Citizens' Group" was frankly a creature of Eldorado, and the business associations, both located in Saskatoon, hardly represented local community support.

Mr. Dakers was not entirely disingenuous in his claim for local support. He was speaking in what might be called a "negotiating mode".

He acknowledged that there was opposition, that there are some who don't accept the idea of a refinery being built in this area or anywhere, "but presented the company as willing to discuss those differences which do exist and to resolve those which lend themselves to resolution." He referred to changes in the site plan to accommodate local and provincial government requirements and the Meewasin Valley Authority, and the company's intention to establish a Public Monitoring Committee as evidence of their flexibility and willingness to accommodate public opinion. He concluded that "Eldorado is firmly committed to working with all shades of opinion within the community, in an effort to improve the project even further, now and once it is built."<sup>25</sup> Mr. Dakers did not attempt to explain how the company's flexibility could be extended to accommodate the crew — zhat a refinery should not be built in Warman or anywhere.

His concluding statement assumed that both proponents and opponents of the project were negotiating from positions adopted for the purpose, and that the final position would be somewhere between each side's original starting point. Like a good negotiator, he also assumed that the final resting place would be closer to his position, hence the implication that what was being discussed was not "if" but "how" it would be built.

The Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB) adopted a position similar to Eldorado's. Tom Viglasky "highlighted" the Board's comments on the EIS for the panel, and distinctly gave the impression that the AECB stamp of approval was already hovering over the project. The Board staff, he said, believed that there were "no major technical concerns relating to the chosen site which would deter eventual granting of a construction approval or issuance of an operating licence for the refinery."<sup>26</sup> He acknowledged that

there were problems -- the potential for accidental emissions or spills of toxic materials had not been studied very carefully, and the company "should attempt to enlighten the public further" on transportation of dangerous materials and waste disposal procedures<sup>27</sup>-- but no major technical concerns that would deter the eventual acceptance of the plant.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Viglasky took this view in spite of the statement at the same session by one of his colleagues that the recycling of waste material at the mine site proposed by Eldorado was still a "trial type of situation."<sup>29</sup> Viglasky's position was a reminder to local participants in the Warman hearings that the issues they were struggling with for the first time had been argued many times already in Ontario. Viglasky regarded the meetings on the Warman proposal as an exercise in public information. In his view the decision on whether there were any "major technical concerns" had already been made. He told Glen Beck that the "examination of hypothetical accidents and the consequences of them" had already been "done for the proposed Eldorado refinery on the Hope township site, and it was accepted by the Board and other environmental agencies." The Warman meetings were "more of a means [of] letting the public in this area of Canada become more knowledgeable and fully understand the operations," according to Mr. Viglasky.<sup>30</sup> In fact, according to Viglasky, the hearings in Warman were, for the AECB staff, an "occasion to evaluate the effectiveness of Eldorado's public information programme and to become cognizant of the concerns of the general public."<sup>31</sup>

It was unnerving for the opponents of the refinery proposal to hear representatives of the national regulating agency speak so complacently of the project at the opening session of the Warman hearings. It was a

little encouraging, therefore, that not all government agencies were so approving. John Mar, speaking for Environment Canada, listed some 24 errors in the EIS, and raised concerns that the study had underestimated the conditions that might lead to air and runoff pollution. He reserved his harshest criticism for the study's failure to adequately examine the impact on the aquatic environment (of the South Saskatchewan River), commenting that it was "so deficient that it is considered completely useless for establishing the existing baseline and for evaluating the residual impacts of plant discharges."<sup>32</sup> His recommendation that "a contingency plan to handle accidental discharges should be proposed"<sup>33</sup> was echoed by Richard Kellow of the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment, who commented, in response to a question from the floor from MLA Peter Prebble (Saskatoon-University NDP), "[W]e would like to look at different scenarios for each of the dangerous chemicals and to look at contingency plans for each of them."<sup>34</sup>

Eldorado's reply to these concerns was to the effect that if the refinery were approved, they would tidy up their data base and improve their contingency planning. According to Ron Dakers, "the EIS was not intended to be a pre-operational base-line study. We undertake those, as we have done on the sites in Ontario, after approval of the site."<sup>35</sup> Not everyone was happy with this response, however. Don Acton of the Canada Agriculture Station at the University of Saskatchewan campus raised the question of whether the impacts on agriculture and the groundwater environments had been adequately appraised, or should be "returned for further investigation".<sup>36</sup> Later in the hearings Glen Beck pressed Dr. Acton for a more definite statement of his "view on the debate about when such information should be made available."<sup>37</sup> The panel had just heard a lengthy

defence of the procedures and qualifications of the scientists who prepared the geohydrology study in the EIS from Dr. Don Cherry of the University of Waterloo, who had conducted the study, who felt that the EIS contained enough information on the possibility of groundwater contamination for the panel to make a decision.<sup>38</sup> Carl Burton of the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment was not sure they did, and wanted to consult with "Mineral Resources" before expressing an opinion.<sup>39</sup> Acton, with many respectful nods to the qualifications of the consultants on the EIS nevertheless held out for absolute certainty in their knowledge before any final decision was made.<sup>40</sup> Later in the hearings, on another issue, Dorothy Meyerhoff of Canada Health and Welfare also argued that their concerns about public health issues should be met before approval could be granted. They were particularly concerned about waste management and accidents.<sup>41</sup> A kind of middle ground between the extremes of general approval and the preference for withholding approval pending more study was expressed in submissions like those of Mr. Dave Kessler, the mayor of Warman. Speaking partly for the council and partly of his "personal concerns", Mr. Kessler urged strongly that controls on chemical emissions from the proposed plant be instituted and enforced, and that such a recommendation be a condition of the panel's approval.<sup>42</sup>

The Mennonites, however, were not negotiating. David Schroeder had outlined the history of Mennonite relations with successive federal and provincial governments at the special session of the panel held in October. It was the habit, especially of more conservative Mennonites, to remain withdrawn from contact with government. If events required inter-action, it was their preference to choose intermediaries to speak on their

behalf. And they did not bargain. As Schroeder put it, "they would not want to be in any hot debate of give and take. They don't agree that way. They make their statement and the pattern [historically] is that they wrote up what they would ask of the government and give it and then wait for a response."<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the most conservative group of Mennonites represented at the hearings in 1980 were the members of the Bergthaler congregation. Their pastor, the Reverend John Reddekopp, spoke on their behalf, very much in the traditional role of the intermediary that Dr. Schroeder had described. After consulting with many members of the congregation (which numbered 979, not including children) Rev. Reddekopp told the panel that he felt that it was "God-given for me to come here and not only speak for myself, but as a leader for the Bergthaler Mennonite Congregation." "It's against our conscience," he said, "to consent to a plant that will refine chemicals used to produce atomic weapons that could later be used to destroy the human race."<sup>44</sup> Panel member Reg Lang pointed out to Rev. Reddekopp that Eldorado had argued "on a number of occasions that they are not going to be making nuclear weapons at their plant and that they don't feel their operation is related to the making of nuclear weapons," but the Bergthalers Rev. Reddekopp replied, could not agree because the company could not give them a guarantee.<sup>4</sup> Having stated the congregation (and his) position, Rev. Reddekopp declined to speculate or debate what might be the consequences of actual construction of the plant, in particular whether people might leave the area, as they had done in response to previous acts of government contrary to their conscience. "At this stage it is too early to answer that" was all he would say. One of the starkest individual expressions of opposition combined with the refusal to prescribe either action or reaction in advance of the

panel's decision was that of Maria Buhler. Speaking through an interpreter (her son) she told the panel that she had come to Canada with her parents in 1925 (during the last wave of immigration from Russia before Stalin closed it down). "I pray to God," she said, "that He might protect us from the nuclear refinery that is to be built at Warman and may spoil or poison this area," and she hoped that the panel might "receive wisdom from Him who has created all things."<sup>46</sup> Reverend Reddekopp's congregation, and Mrs. Buhler, were at one end of a spectrum, both in position and style, the other end of which was occupied by Eldorado.

The many different issues raised in relation to the refinery proposal, and the wide range of speakers, nevertheless gave the hearings the air of an ongoing debate. People returned to listen, and, occasionally, to interject comments from the floor, day after day, or followed the proceedings on the radio. Some, like Elery Peters, the physical education teacher from the Martensville elementary school (two weeks of the hearings were held in his "classroom", the school gymnasium) commented that his brief had undergone a "continuous revamping process" over the two weeks that he waited for his turn to come.<sup>47</sup> He discarded his previously prepared statement on the hazards of a refinery to comment critically on what he called the "'big business vision' or BBV," which tended, he said, to "place the dollar factor above the human factor". For those who had been involved longest the tension was sometimes unbearable. Jake Buhler told the panel on the last night of the meetings in Martensville, "I stayed away from a number of hearings to regain my composure; I was fragile, I was too easily intimidated."<sup>48</sup>



Members of the audience demonstrated their support for one side or the other, or their appreciation of a particularly brisk exchange, by what the chairman called a "yahoo match,"<sup>49</sup> but, in spite of protests from the chair and the floor, the audience continued to make itself felt throughout the proceedings. The practice was firmly entrenched by the evening of the first session. Peter Prebble was applauded when he rose to his feet to rebut a statement by Ron Dakers of Eldorado on the protection afforded by the requirement that countries buying Canadian uranium must have signed a non-proliferation treaty or a Bilateral Canadian Safeguards Treaty. Prebble pointed out that there were no sanctions in the event that a signatory customer backed out of such an agreement, and that therefore the treaty was "not an adequate assurance that Canadian uranium would not be used for nuclear weapons."<sup>50</sup> Later in the same session the issue came up again. Mr. Dakers argued that "there is no direct relationship between the peaceful and military utilization of nuclear fusion," during his argument on the rapid increase in numbers of nuclear power stations in operation compared to the relatively limited number of "nuclear weapon states."<sup>51</sup> Leo Driedger was applauded when he leaped to his feet to say that Mr. Daker's comments were "unreal". "You sound as if the world is in equilibrium ... and you will control who will use atomic bombs. Amazing!"<sup>52</sup> Earlier in the same session young Joe Froese had been applauded after a brief and emotional statement, apparently by way of encouragement.<sup>53</sup> Two days later a clapping match was precipitated by a sharp exchange between Louise Buhler of the WDCCG, and Andy Roake. Ms. Buhler's brief took the form of a number of questions addressed to the Eldorado, and Mr. Roake stated that "we would like to receive Mrs. Buhler's comments in writing before responding to all



of them. Ms. Buhler's response, that she would "like all of your answers in writing for future use," was also applauded. Mr. Roake then asked if she were a member of the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group, and, Buhler was once again applauded when she snapped back, "I'd like to ask how that is relevant to you." The chairman protested the "clapping match" but the debate between the two continued, with the audience favouring now one side, now the other. Roake raised the issue of whether representatives of the construction trades present might be given some time to state whether they wanted jobs or not, and Buhler unguardedly replied, "I'm not interested in what the construction people think." Before she could continue to describe what she was interested in, Roake was applauded for a quick interjection, "Oh, okay. You're just interested in what you think."<sup>54</sup> Donald Glazier was applauded for his presentation on behalf of the RM of Corman Park supporting the proposal, and so was Frank Hueston of Eldorado when he assured Adele Smillie, who described herself as the mother of five children and recently a grandmother, that he too did not want to have emergency equipment tested in Saskatoon.<sup>55</sup>

At this point a member of the audience objected to the clapping, and the chairman agreed that "clapping is certainly a form of intimidation" as well as time-consuming.<sup>56</sup> However, the highly partisan audience would not be subdued. By the evening of the first day of hearings in Saskatoon Andy Roake was complaining that he found the "continual clapping and interruption intimidating."<sup>57</sup> The evening sessions were particularly crowded and vigorous. By the second last evening in Saskatoon the chairman's protests were becoming noticeably weary. Once again an opponent of the refinery had engaged in an exchange with an Eldorado spokesman and been enthusiastically applauded. John Klenavic erupted:

Really, every time you clap takes another 30 seconds, and we are going to run out. There is an absolute limit, so if you think this is fun, by all means do it.

We have put these two extra sessions on for the benefit of the people that registered to speak. Suit yourselves.<sup>58</sup>

Eventually, during the week in Saskatoon, applause became a means of expressing not just support for the speakers, but disapproval of the chairman's attempts to limit the length of time allowed each speaker and to permit Eldorado spokesmen to question and comment. In the same session that provoked Klenavic's outburst, later in the afternoon, Anne Smart of the SCNS was applauded seven times during the course of her presentation, and the final speaker, Don Sugden, who was very hostile to the whole hearings process (he referred to it as a "joke") was also applauded several times, even as the chairman was asking him to finish his remarks so that the three remaining speakers could be heard before the end of the session. Mr. Sugden chose to continue, however, beyond the 10 minute limit that had been imposed earlier in the hearings, and the chairman adjourned the session. Mr. Sugden's final remark was to "screech" at the chairman, as Glen Beck remembered later, to "shut up".<sup>59</sup>

The following day, the last day in Saskatoon, found the chairman commenting in his opening remarks that the limits to the way the proceedings could be conducted had been exceeded the day before.<sup>60</sup> In the middle of that session Murray Dobbin spoke from the floor on behalf of the SCNS asking that "people in the audience regardless of how how they feel about the nature of these hearings and the likelihood that this panel will reject the refinery that they refrain from catcalls and booing."<sup>61</sup>

Earlier in the session, during the presentation of his own brief, Mr. Dobbin had referred to the anti-nuclear "movement", to which, he commented, the hearings and thus the panel had made an "unwilling contribution" by obliging those opposed to the nuclear industry to organize and to inform themselves. Dobbin took the view that, regardless of the recommendations of the panel, "The people of this community will not permit the construction of this refinery."<sup>62</sup> In his plea for order Dobbin referred again to the notion that "we are trying to build a movement in this city and I believe that catcalls and booing do not assist us in doing that."<sup>63</sup> Despite Klenavic's frequent protests that the public meetings were not a voting procedure, many persisted in perceiving them in that way. In addition, the agreement between the SCNS and the WDCCG to maintain a non-confrontational stance at the panel sessions did not cover all the opponents to the refinery, and fears that the decision was a foregone conclusion, that opposition was futile, were exacerbated by the limitations required by the unexpected numbers of speakers, and the practice of allowing Eldorado an active role in questioning and commenting on briefs.

The hearings were the culmination of four years of debate about the refinery and the uranium industry, and many of the issues which had emerged in the preceding period were restated for the benefit of the panel. Ever since Nicholas Ediger had stated in September of 1978 that the company would not build where it was not wanted, the opponents of the proposal had pushed for some explanation of how the company was going to decide whether it was wanted. Another way of putting it, perhaps, is that they were really asking to know what it would take to persuade them that they were not welcome. Ediger did not invent the issue, of course, he merely provided a convenient way of articulating it. The same issue had appeared in a

slightly different guise at the Bayda inquiry, in the form of a number of recommendations from speakers from the Warman area and Saskatoon that decisions on uranium projects be made by referendum rather than by cabinet. Ralph Katzman, the MLA (P-C) for the Rosthern constituency in which the Warman site is located, raised the issue when he appeared before the panel to give them the results of a survey of 5625 households in the constituency. He got a nearly 20% return, an overwhelming rejection of a refinery (803 to 224) and an even stronger vote in favour of deciding the issue by a vote of the residents (840 to 183). Mr. Katzman declined to be drawn on the question of whether he opposed the refinery per se, although both panelists, Eldorado spokesmen, and, finally a member of the audience, tried to get him to declare himself. The essence of his position was, as he put it to Andy Roake "I think you cannot satisfy me that this is the right site."<sup>64</sup> Sam Rempel had raised the issue before the Bayda Commission, and put it to the Eldorado panel again, toward the end of their meetings. "Will Eldorado keep the promise they have publicly made on a number of occasions that they will not build a refinery where they are not wanted?"<sup>65</sup> During the question period following Mr. Rempel's statement, Reg Lang pressed Andy Roake for a specific response to the question of "what you mean by majority and what you mean by the community." What was "critical" to Mr. Lang was whether Eldorado saw the majority expressing itself in "forums" like the panel hearings, or "through elected representatives," or in some other way. Roake responded, "Our position is the latter", meaning, presumably, through elected representatives.<sup>66</sup> The question dogged Eldorado throughout the hearings, and provoked a variety of responses from the company's spokesmen. Earlier, in Saskatoon, Andy Roake had irritably replied to Rick McCormick:

Mr. McCormick, we've clarified Mr. Ediger's statement on two occasions during these hearings. I'll do it again for you: basically we've said that we won't go where we're not wanted, and proof of being wanted is a building permit.<sup>67</sup>

When Mr. McCormick persisted in his questioning, wanting to know how Roake would define a majority, Roake replied "A majority of people usually elect the government of an area." This statement provoked an outburst of heckling from the audience, who then applauded McCormick's final challenge, "I hope you and the panel will see that I am one of that majority that does not want your refinery at Warman."<sup>68</sup> The opposition to Eldorado's reliance on the approval of town councils and other "representative" bodies, right up to the provincial government, for confirmation of their welcome was partly local and partly a reflection of the divisions within the province on the issue. It was local in the sense that by tradition in the Warman area a majority of Mennonites tended to exclude themselves from participation in or even voting for local governments. As a result they tended to feel that such bodies did not necessarily "represent" them, in the sense of having a mandate to speak for them, especially on the uranium issue. Within the province as a whole opponents of the uranium industry had tried to make it an election issue in both federal and provincial elections, and it had been raised within the ruling NDP by dissenters from the official party platform of support for provincial resource industries and resource-related secondary development.

Another element of the debate within the province which had predated the Eldorado panel hearings and which was brought before them was the question of aid to the "third world." The Bayda commission had adopted

the view that increasing uranium-based energy facilities could only benefit the "developing nations", directly or indirectly. Premier Blakeney had articulated the position in response to an open letter from Bill Harding published during the provincial election campaign in the fall of 1978. Mr. Harding had been a civil servant with the CCF government in Saskatchewan for nearly 20 years, and later an employee of the party. At the time of his retirement in 1975 he was Director of Program Policy for the United Nations Development Program at UN headquarters in New York. In his letter he raised the issue of representation from yet another angle, accusing the NDP of effectively "disenfranchising" him. Harding could "never", he wrote, "vote for the traditional free enterprise parties," and the NDP pro-development platform which overlooked the "fact that this uranium will go into a global nuclear cycle and will inevitably add to the stockpile of nuclear weapons" made it impossible for him to vote for the NDP. Harding's rhetorical attack elicited a defence of the morality of his party's (and government's) position from Blakeney: "for many third world countries, the only energy available for industrial development is nuclear energy, and that to refuse them nuclear energy is to condemn them to a future of subsistence living."<sup>69</sup> Blakeney also argued that if developed nations, like Japan, eschewed nuclear energy for oil and coal, their superior buying power would make these resources expensive and scarce as well. On the second night of the hearings Andy Roake referred to the 3rd world issue in his opening remarks, echoing Premier Blakeney's argument that the export of uranium was virtually a moral obligation: "If uranium is not available, then it's a worse economic struggle between the industrialized nations and the Third World, both demanding oil to sustain their economic and social well-being."<sup>70</sup>

His statement gave rise to one of the more dramatic coincidences of the hearings, because his statement was immediately followed by a presentation from Dorothy Friesen on the effects of a nuclear energy development on local people in Bataan Peninsula in the Phillipines. After recounting the history of dispossession, arrest and torture of objectors and critics, and military control that accompanied the construction of a nuclear generating station on the peninsula, Ms. Friesen concluded that only foreign manufacturers, the military (including American bases) and the rich would benefit from the new plant. "The 80% of Filipinos who are poor and cannot afford electric appliances will derive no benefits."<sup>71</sup> Andy Roake acknowledged Ms. Friesen's expertise (she and her husband had been working in Asia from 1976 to 1979 for the Mennonite Central Committee, two years of which had been spent in the Philippines) but protested that Eldorado had no dealings with the Philippines. Indeed, according to Ron Dakers, the company had no dealings with the third world.<sup>72</sup> The benefits to poorer nations of supporting uranium refining in Saskatchewan would clearly be very indirect indeed.

While the WDCCG and their associates focussed their objections to the project on the weapons connection, the intrusion into a way of life, and the stewardship of the land, perspectives which had emerged as central for them in the four years of discussion preceding the hearings, some entirely new issues were introduced at the panel meetings as well. One of these was the whole question of whether the Canadian uranium industry actually had any need for a new refinery in Saskatchewan. The company EIS had referred to "The need for a uranium refinery in Saskatchewan" in a brief section, not quite two pages, concerned mainly with current figures



on the number of uranium-fueled generating stations world-wide, expectations for expansion in generating, the world refining and mining capacities, the expectations of increases in Saskatchewan ore production, and government policy on processing of raw materials (do it at home).<sup>73</sup> Members of the panel commented on the expectation that further information was required in this area, at their first opportunity to question the Eldorado representatives at the first sitting of the panel. Ron Dakers of Eldorado, in his opening remarks to the panel, commented that "The timing of plant construction and the startup of the timing will depend on the startup and timing of new uranium mines now being developed in the province." If the site were approved and permission to start construction given, only then would Eldorado "prepare a detailed cost estimate and feasibility study, before making a final decision on the project."<sup>74</sup> Since Eldorado was expecting to start construction in 1982, Glen Beck on the panel wanted to know "what major unknowns" might affect a decision on construction in the intervening two years.<sup>75</sup> Daker's reply was that "the question first is the sufficiency of uranium production in the province of Saskatchewan." Specifically, a go-ahead depended on whether the proposed Key Lake mine went into operation.<sup>76</sup> A go-ahead in mining would be, in Daker's reasoning, an indication that a market existed, as "Presumably", he told Beck, "if the mining goes ahead, they will have sales of that material."<sup>77</sup> Reg Lang pursued the issue that Beck's original question had raised, wanting to know if Eldorado intended to "demonstrate" that there was a market, in addition to merely having said that there was one.<sup>78</sup> He received much the same answer from Dakers, "presumably, people who are in mining operations or mining development, do not proceed until they have sufficient sales or



projected sales".<sup>79</sup> Herman Boerma found their response evasive and raised the question of "more information on market analysis and demand projections" again from the floor, to be told again that "mine production" was "the basic concept of this refinery proposal."<sup>80</sup> Later in the same session Ian Rounthwaite of the Environmental Law Society attempted to intervene from the floor and discover from Richard Kellow of the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment what participation in the Warman proposal hearings might be expected from the Key Lake Panel. The answer was none. The Key Lake Board of Inquiry was an independent board, and no one had any information about or direct influence on their intentions.

Boerma persisted in pressing the issue, commenting at length in his formal presentation that evening. His position had clearly been prepared in advance, as part of the Environmental Society's official brief, and exhaustively questioned the presumed need for nuclear energy in general, and for a third refinery in Canada. He concluded that "the whole dream of there being a need for a third uranium refinery in Canada appears to be devoid of any basis in fact."<sup>81</sup> Bob Carleton, who had participated in the Port Granby hearings, commented on the rationale for that project, and observed that having heard from Eldorado and government officials during that set of hearings, the panel appeared to be taking the view "We have confirmed the need, we are not going to confirm it every time around." Both Reg Lang and Glen Beck, panel members who had raised the question of need themselves, were new to the FEARO panel. John Klenavic announced a special session would be held in Martensville, and on January 21, three days before the end of the hearings, Eldorado presented their rationale on the need for the project. It was considerably more extensive than that which

appeared in the EIS, and was supported by O.J.C. Runnalls, professor of energy studies, in the department of industrial engineering at the University of Toronto, and a former senior policy advisor to Canada Energy, Mines and Resources Mr. H. Merlin, from Energy, Mines and Resources' Energy policy sector in the electrical, coal, uranium and nuclear energy branch. After over two hours of testimony Land and Dakers had virtually the same exchange that had taken place in the opening session of the hearings, that Eldorado's rationale was "based primarily on the development of uranium production in Saskatchewan," and that the mines going ahead would in itself be evidence of the existence of a market.<sup>82</sup> Beck also noted that "the care for the world energy situation rested very heavily on their being, or anticipating, the structural shift in energy consumption ... with the industrialized countries beginning to pick up their future requirements from nuclear power." He wanted to know "what is the mechanism for causing that?" but was unable to get a precise answer from Mr. Dakers, who said only, "I believe it has to happen."<sup>83</sup> Dr. Runnalls spoke to the question as well, quoting Alvin Weinberg's optimistic "look to a situation where nuclear energy will be developed by those countries that have the infrastructure to handle such complexities in such a way that ... we can reduce our oil demands in the industrialized countries to let oil be the source of energy for the Third World."<sup>84</sup> This vision of a shift to nuclear power generated by altruism had appeared in the Cluff Lake Inquiry Board's hearings in Warman three years earlier, presented by Dr. Runnalls among others, and had been greeted with skepticism from Nettie Wiebe then. No further comment was made on it before the Eldorado panel, and in the end nothing new was learned in the examination of Eldorado's more exhaustive rationale for the project. It appeared to have been born out of the mining boom in the province

and government resource policies, and sustained by hopes that the downward trend in nuclear generation station planning had "bottomed out", as Runnalls put it.<sup>85</sup>

The public meeting of the FEARO panel did allow, then, for some examination, or reexamination, of the refinery proposal. Some new issues were introduced, and both the proponents and the opponents had an opportunity to make their cases. They were able to reach a much wider audience than just the panel members with their arguments, because of the intense public interest, and the attention given to the proceedings by the news media. However, there was a good deal of dissatisfaction expressed on all sides. Some has already been noted. The prominent place in the proceedings allowed to Eldorado as the proponent of the project aroused contention. The sheer pressure of numbers created problems that could have been alleviated only by greatly prolonging the meetings. The public demand for space on the program reflected an attitude to the hearings very different from that of the panel chairman. The public persisted in regarding the meetings as an opportunity to show the extent as well as the nature of the opposition, or support. While the chairman hoped to focus solely on the issues, many of the groups and individuals who appeared also had one eye on the numbers.

The attempt to make the meetings as accessible as possible to the public caused other difficulties as well. The procedures were deliberately informal. Speakers might be questioned for clarification, but they were not under oath and were allowed a wide latitude in the kind of presentation they could make. This encouraged participation, but on the other hand provided no grounds for challenge, and frustrated the WDCCG's strategy of using the "intervenor" status to counter-question the proponents

of the refinery. Over 30 people had this status at the hearings, which was intended to extend the opportunity to ask questions of speakers to a wider range of participants without throwing it open to all. Some, like Herman Boerma of the SES, acted for groups. Others, like Peter Prebble, acted as individuals. The WDCCG made extensive use of the special status. Many of the intervenors were directly or indirectly connected with the group: Jake and Louise Buhler, Edgar Epp, Ernie Hildebrand and Jim Robbins were all "intervenors", as well as Leo Driedger and David Schroeder. With the judicial atmosphere of the Cluff Lake Inquiry in mind the WDCCG had also engaged a young Saskatoon lawyer of the Saskatchewan Environmental Law Society, Ian Ronnithwaite, to act on their behalf. His frustrations illustrated the shortcomings of the procedures in this area.

On the first day of the Eldorado project meetings in Martensville Mr. Ronnithwaite introduced two areas of concern that he thought might be major impediments to proceeding with a refinery. One was that the Key Lake mining development, on the production from which much of the demand for refining capacity was to be based, was itself going to the subject of a public hearing in the near future. The outcomes of the Warman refinery panel's deliberations and the Key Lake inquiry would seem to be necessarily interdependent, but Mr. Ronnithwaite could not get either Richard Kellow of Saskatchewan Environment or John Klenavic to acknowledge that there might be a problem. Ronnithwaite also urged that the Meewasin Valley Authority appear to explain its position, but they never did.<sup>86</sup>

By the second day of the meetings, however, it was already apparent that what was intended to be a decorous series of presentations to the panel had a tendency to break down into vigorous give and take

among the participants, and the chairman was moving to curb a tendency to prolong and escalate these exchanges. He squashed an attempt of Rounthwaite's to rebut Eldorado spokesman Andy Roake's statements on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in spite of Rounthwaite's protests about the procedures. Rounthwaite yielded the floor "under protest". Their exchange revealed many of the strains the procedures were subject to:

IAN ROUNTHWAITE: ...May I make a few comments on what Mr. Roake had to say on the treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Rounthwaite, I have at least 20 more speakers tonight who want to make comments. Could you perhaps just register if you want to deliver another speech? It won't be possible tonight, we'll be stopping at 11:00 p.m. and we're not going to get everybody on.

IAN ROUNTHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I don't wish to be antagonistic, but since you are giving Eldorado sufficient time to criticize the briefs...

THE CHAIRMAN: What I am in fact doing is having one and a half hour criticism of Eldorado and allowing them ten minutes to reply. The total time of ten minutes includes the other people who have also spoken.

IAN ROUNTHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, if I may point out that Eldorado has had over two years to prepare its case...<sup>87</sup>

Mr. Rounthwaite continued to be prevented from challenging Eldorado, and finally spoke "just for the record." His last attempt was to discover when the written answers to some questions promised by Eldorado would be

forthcoming. He noted that Mr. Ron Dakers had sidestepped the query twice. The chairman merely observed, "Well, that does not really help us at all,"<sup>88</sup> and Mr. Rounthwaite went unanswered.

Glen Beck observed that Rounthwaite's frustrations were part of a larger problem:

...It had to be very frustrating for the young lawyer fellow representing the WDCCG. From time to time he made a challenge on points of order and so on. While I may or may not have agreed with the substance of his challenge at the time, he certainly should be able to say now what are the rules of order here, what are the rules of evidence?

Klenavic's position was we just hear everything.

Herman Boerma had raised the problem of the "rules of evidence" in the SES brief on the first day of the hearings, and returned to it in their summary statement on the final day. How could proof be established, he wondered, without some of the procedures of the courtroom -- rules of evidence, cross-examination, power of subpoena, testimony under oath, intervenors' right to counsel?<sup>89</sup> In his summary he noted that "shifting the burden of proof from the proponents to the public" and "procedures inadequate to establish proof" were major inadequacies in the process. Dr. David Scott, who had participated in the Bayda Inquiry as an expert witness, pointed out that the "adversary process" that was part of the judicial mode was very intimidating to most people, and hence would have a tendency to reduce public participation.<sup>91</sup>

Another problem with the procedures was that they were occasionally simply confusing to people, and left many with the impression that they were unfairly applied. One of the areas of contention was the

business of asking questions. "Questions of clarification" were permitted, the chairman announced at the beginning of each session.<sup>92</sup> Eldorado representatives and the public intervenors were allowed to ask questions. Both sets of questioners gave rise to complaints. During the second session Herman Boerma raised a "point of procedure," complaining that he had been "asked to rush my brief as short as I could," but that the chairman was "allowing Eldorado a lot of time to make additional speeches" in the time set aside for "points of clarification."<sup>93</sup> Albert Haas backed him up, alleging that Mr. Roake, in responding to issues raised by Judy and Ronda Hildebrand, brought some market analysis "just through the back door."<sup>94</sup> The complaint that Eldorado was making speeches under the guise of asking questions was repeated from time to time throughout the meetings. Frequently these protests were linked to references to the pressure of time, and the audience's preference for hearing from someone else. Deborah Hopkins of the SCNS commented that "Eldorado, ... under the guise of asking questions, is just launching into half-hour speeches, and we have some learned medical expertise that I'd like to hear from this afternoon."<sup>95</sup> The participants were, in effect, beating the chairman with his own stick quite deliberately. In the evening session following Ms. Hopkins' comments, Rick McCormick of the SCNS attempted to interrupt Frank Hueston of Eldorado, who was reading a statement by Reverend Dr. William G. Pollard into the record, in reply to a brief presented by Rev. Ben G. Smillie of St. Andrews College, University of Saskatchewan opposing the refinery. John Klenavic defended allowing Hueston's counter-statement, saying:

Professor Smillie spoke for seven minutes to state some ethical considerations. I do not think it is asking too much of the audience to listen for four minutes to hear another view.<sup>96</sup>

Klenavic objected at this point to the "Yea-Boo contest" being conducted. Smillie was applauded four times during his presentation. McCormick argued with Klenavic's ruling, saying that "As I understand the process, Eldorado is allowed to ask for points of clarification." He reminded the chairman that he was "making many statements about the limited time available" and expressed the concern that "if you allow Eldorado to continue reading into the record and making statements," that time would indeed grow short, and "there will be more difficulties than there already are with getting all the people of Saskatoon and Warman and District to have an opportunity to make a presentation."<sup>97</sup>

Participants were equally confused, and eventually angered, by seeming inconsistencies in permitting questions from the floor. Intervenors were allowed to put such questions, but were rarely identified as such when they did, so it appeared that some members of the audience were allowed to speak while others were not. Protests erupted on several occasions. The evening of the first session in Saskatoon was repeatedly interrupted by queries from the floor. Dr. Walter Kupsch, a geologist at the University of Saskatchewan in favour of the proposal, ended his statement with the rhetorical question "Do we want to go back to the time of the ploughs on the prairies being pulled by Doukhobor women?"<sup>98</sup> A member of the audience promptly challenged the chairman, who had allowed Dr. Kupsch 19 minutes rather than the 15 that was the standard practice. The chairman defended



himself on the ground that he had allowed the previous speaker, who was against the refinery, 19 minutes as well; he also observed that the total so far that evening had been "68 minutes of anti-nuclear" against the 19 minutes of Dr. Kupsch's presentation.<sup>95</sup> The chairman's attempts to get to the next presentation were interrupted by two more speakers from the floor, one of whom quoted the panel's information pamphlet at the chairman to the effect that people were to be allowed to ask questions, and to ask more than one question: "I wrote to Mr. Connelly about it and he said I could and he told me today I could and I see more than one question being asked when Eldorado wants to," an aggrieved woman announced.<sup>100</sup> The chairman responded wearily, "I also have 26 speakers this evening and it is really up to you whether you want to ask questions of one man or you want to hear the other 20 people that still would like to speak this evening?"<sup>101</sup> Members of the audience again protested when the chairman allowed Bob Carleton and Joe Didyk to comment on the presentations in spite of the understanding that no further questions were to be allowed that evening.<sup>102</sup> The following day the chairman introduced a new time limit of 10 minutes for each speaker, but the problem of who was allowed to question the speakers was never resolved to the satisfaction of the audience. The chairman occasionally resorted to levity to get over the rough patches. Dale Schmeichel, an employee of SMDC rose to ask a question of a local physician, Phillip Loftus, who had spoken against the refinery on behalf of his fellow practitioners at the Saskatoon Community Clinic. Mr. Schmeichel cautiously asked the chairman, "Before I address a question to Dr. Loftus, I'd like to request of the panel chairman whether I am allowed to ask more than one question, or just what the situation is?" He got a terse reply: "Keep wingin' 'em, we'll cut you off."<sup>103</sup>

In reviewing the FEARO procedures generally Dr. Stan Rowe of the University of Saskatchewan Plant Ecology Department commented that "if panel hearings are the only point of public input, then all the frustrations will come out there."<sup>104</sup> Both Rowe, and later Boerma, pointed out that there had been almost no further input into the process from the beginning. "Public reaction was no factor at all in Eldorado's initial assessment of a refinery site in Saskatchewan,"<sup>105</sup> Rowe said, and, "The panel appointment process is shrouded in mystery."<sup>106</sup> The objections to the overall procedures, of which the hearings were only a part, had been raised in the early winter of 1979 by the WDCCG and others. They were prepared to go on raising them beyond the panel hearings, if necessary, as one strategy among many in what they feared would be a prolonged battle.

The failure to expose the process to public scrutiny and input was a disservice to the panel as well as to the citizens, in the opinion of one panel member. Glen Beck thought:

...I feel it's a bit of a cop out to set up a panel of "experts" to examine essentially a political issue. This was not resolved on the basis of the technical argument one way or the other. And I think that it's a scandal which serves the politicians well. Why don't they put MLAs and MPs on such a panel ... people don't vote for us, ... they have no recourse. ... If they want to have me before them and ask me what I think of the economic evidence that's been put before them, fine, I'll tell them that. But to judge the broader issue -- it's unfair to society, it's unfair to me, and it's overfair to the politician who escapes responsibility.

Occasionally it appeared that the fact that some of these adversaries had met in other arenas affected the procedures in Saskatchewan. Dr. Gordon Edwards of The Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, speaking at WDCCG's request got short shrift from the chairman of the hearing panel, who insisted on the application of the "ten minute rule" in spite of the fact that people scheduled to speak after him offered their time slots. Klenavic observed that they had heard his testimony before. That was true for some members, those who had participated in earlier hearings in Ontario, but not for the three new members from the West. Glen Beck recalled "...this was essentially a new witness as far as we were concerned. ...In fairness to Klenavic, he had heard him, over and over again, on both the previous hearings. He may have lost track at times, but this was a new panel, and it is a public hearing ... you have to assume that part of the purpose is for your audience to hear as well."

Dr. Edwards had come from Montreal to address the panel, and the failure to allow him more time led to a procedural wrangle that took up nearly as much time again. Many people in the audience were timing the presentations by the time Edwards appeared, during the second day of meetings in Saskatoon. The chairman was reminded that the previous day he had allowed Dr. Julius Metrakos 32 minutes to address the panel. Dr. Metrakos was with McGill University's Human Genetics Centre and appeared as the guest of Eldorado. The two speakers following Edwards on the list, one of them from Regina and the other from eastern Canada, volunteered to give up their "slots" to allow him more time, but the offers were not accepted by the chairman.

It was never clear what the powers of the panel were, and this jurisdictional vagueness itself caused difficulties. The sessions were

"meetings", not "hearings"; the panel did not have powers to take testimony under oath, or to subpoena speakers or materials. In theory they were limited in their examination of the project to the materials brought before them. Gordon Edwards was aware of the problem, and filed a "stack of documents" or exhibits "to try and give the panel some extra testimony in absentia."<sup>107</sup> The panel were not entirely passive, themselves. They arranged for Dr. David Schroeder to appear before them, and held a special session on the need for the project to fill a gap in the EIS coverage. However, the panels' only real recourse in the face of a major inadequacy in the EIS was to do what in the end they did, recommend that Eldorado return to the field to carry out the social impact studies which were lacking in the original EIS, and resubmit the project for review. In his review of the FEARO process during the Warman panel meetings Stan Roe had ironically observed that such a procedure implied "that the purpose of the review process is to help the proponent to get it right, no matter how long it takes."<sup>108</sup>

Whether Eldorado could ever have "got it right," as far as this particular project is concerned, is a moot point. Certainly it was clear that more public input at the site selection stage, or even at the later stage of the EIS, could have averted a great deal of the difficulties the company incurred. Glen Beck also blamed the "science overburden", the failure to take the social sciences into consideration when designing and carrying out an environmental impact statement. "It struck me as disturbing that they'd recruit almost every scientist willing to work for the cause, but not make any effort to find people in the social sciences to examine the issue."

Rowe, ironic still, suggested at the panel meetings that perhaps Eldorado had a hidden agenda, that perhaps they had never really wanted to build in Saskatchewan in the first place. If Eldorado built in the west their eastern plant in Port Hope would likely be under-utilized and their costs for transportation of materials higher, he noted.

"The suspicion that Eldorado has figured this out and is lukewarm about finding a home in Saskatchewan explains two otherwise puzzling facts.

"The first is that Eldorado's proposed Port Granby refinery site was refused on the grounds that it would take up useful agricultural land and damage the rural social fabric. Nevertheless at Warman, Eldorado selected what it must have known would be a controversial site -- at the edge of a city, beside a river, in a farming area with a pacifist people.

"Secondly the provincial government specifically asked Eldorado to make environmental impact studies on more than one possible refinery site ... The request was apparently ignored."<sup>109</sup> Whether Eldorado blundered primarily because their focus was on the technology and not on the people, they declined the opportunity to "get it right." The proposal failed because, from the beginning, it had failed to take the people into account.

## FOOTNOTES

1. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, Transcripts, I, 1-3. The chairman repeated his observations on the non-binding nature of the deliberations and of the panel's recommendations at the opening of each session.
2. Leo Driedger, "Community Conflict: The Eldorado Invasion of Warman," The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology/Revue Canadienne de sociologie et d'anthropologie, 23:2 (May 1986), 255.
3. Driedger, "Community Conflict," p.257.
4. Driedger, "Community Conflict," p.257.
5. International Reporting, EEAP, III, 421.
6. International Reporting, EEAP, III, 423.
7. International Reporting, EEAP, III, 423.
8. International Reporting, EEAP, III, 423.
9. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, I, 4.
10. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, II, 137.
11. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, III, 340.
12. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, III, 345.
13. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, III, 344.
14. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, III, 427.
15. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, III, 427.
16. Driedger, "Community Conflict," pp.258-9.
17. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, XXII, 3064.
18. Ibid., XXII, 3066.
19. Ibid., I, 17.
20. Ibid., I, 13.
21. Ibid., I 18-22.

22. Ibid., I, 20-21.
23. Ibid., I, 24.
24. See above, Ch.V, p.109, Warman Mayor Dave Kessler's comments on the Town Council's endorsement of the project, and p.135 ff., and Ch.VI, passim, for comments on Corman Park's position.
25. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, I, 23-5.
26. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, I, 95.
27. Ibid., I, 100.
28. Ibid., I, 196. The phrasing is actually that of panel member Glen Beck.
29. Ibid., p.103, Joe Didyk, AECB, replying to a question from panel member Reg Lang.
30. Ibid., pp.105-6.
31. Ibid., p.96.
32. Ibid., I, 59.
33. Ibid., I, 53.
34. Ibid., I, 89.
35. Ibid., I, 68.
36. Ibid., I, 127.
37. Ibid., V, 624.
38. Ibid., V, 621.
39. Ibid., V, 622.
40. Ibid., V, 624.
41. Ibid., IX, 1087-8.
42. Ibid., IV, 532-3.
43. International Reporting Inc., "Information Meeting, in the matter

of Eldorado Nuclear Limited's proposed uranium hexafluoride refinery at Warman, Saskatchewan," 25 Oct. '79, p.37.

44. International Reporting, EEAP, Transcripts, XVIII, 2525.
45. Ibid., XVIII, 2531.
46. Ibid., XVIII, 2532.
47. Ibid., XVIII, 2534.
48. Ibid., XII, 3039.
49. Ibid., VII, 827.
50. Ibid., II, 314-15.
51. Ibid., II, 331.
52. Ibid., II, 534-5.
53. Ibid., II, 322-6.
54. Ibid., VI, 725-7.
55. Ibid., VII, 821, 827.
56. Ibid., VII, 827-8.
57. Ibid., VIII, 944.
58. Ibid., XIII, 1808.
59. Ibid., XIII, 1869.
60. Ibid., XIV, 1875.
61. Ibid., XIV, 1929.
62. Ibid., XIV, 1926.
63. Ibid., XIV, 1929.
64. The discussion of the survey appears in International Reporting, Inc., EEAP, Transcripts, IV, 552-3; the response to Andy Roake appears on p.561.
65. Ibid., XVII, 2543.
66. Ibid., XVIII, 2546.



67. Ibid., XIII, 1772.
68. Ibid., XIII, 1772-3.
69. Bill Harding, Uranium Mining in Northern Saskatchewan, Correspondence with the Premier, Regina Group for a Non-Nuclear Society, Regina, 1979, p.14.
70. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, Transcripts, IV, 441.
71. Ibid., IV, 447-59; quotation from p.458.
72. Ibid., IV, 496-7.
73. Eldorado Nuclear Limited, Environmental Impact Study for a Uranium Refinery in Corman Park, Saskatchewan, July 1949, pp.1-2 to 1-4.
74. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, Transcripts, I, 15.
75. Ibid., I, 39.
76. Ibid., I, 39.
77. Ibid., I, 39.
78. Ibid., I, 41.
79. Ibid., I, 41.
80. Ibid., I, 46.
81. Ibid., II, 224.
82. Ibid., XVI, 2272-3.
83. Ibid., XVI, 2783-4.
84. Ibid., XVI, 2785.
85. Ibid., XVI, 2239.
86. Ibid., I, 83.
87. Ibid., IV, 502.
88. Ibid., XIII, 1734.
89. Ibid., I, 205.
90. Ibid., XXII, 3017
91. Ibid., I, 274-6

92. Ibid., I, 5, and throughout.
93. Ibid., II, 310-11.
94. Ibid., II, 311.
95. Ibid., IX, 1103.
96. Ibid., X, 1286.
97. Ibid., X, 1286-7.
98. Ibid., VIII, 959.
99. Ibid., VIII, 959-60.
100. Ibid., VIII, 962.
101. Ibid., loc. cit.
102. Ibid., VIII, 994.
103. Ibid., IX, 1143.
104. Ibid., VIII, 1005.
105. Ibid., VIII, 1001.
106. Ibid., VIII, 1002. Boerma made his comments on the final day of the hearings, in a summary statement (Ibid., XXII, 3017-18).
107. Ibid., XI, 1379.
108. Ibid., VIII, 1004.
109. Ibid., VIII, 998-9.

## 7. A COMMUNITY VICTORY

Within a week after the hearings rumors were circulating in the community that the refinery would be turned down. It was an agonizing time for the WDCCG, almost as painful as the period of the hearings. They had "won" in terms of numbers, but the expert opinions might still outweigh local people expressing their fears of environmental pollution, arms proliferation and land use priorities in non-technical and occasionally very emotional terms. The WDCCG had criticized some of the material in the EIS on its own terms, in particular the information on the agricultural potential of the land to be taken over, and the dangers of airborne pollution of soil and vegetation. However, they focussed their stand, not on scientific or technical expertise, but on the fact that they were "experts" in living in the area.

Years later, at the reunion, they remembered three areas that stood out as the salient features of their concern: the tie-in with nuclear weapons; the possibility of environmental damage; and, the intrusion into a way of life.

Edgar Epp remembered, "We agreed that we would not pretend to be experts on anything technical. And then of course we got individuals like Jim [Robbins] coming along who wrote papers that tended to have more technical information and more accurate information than the ones that the experts were producing. But as a group we did not. We said that is not what we are all about. We are experts at living in this community."

However, the group did call for expert witnesses to help out when they realized how deficient the EIS was in the area of social science.

They invited Leo Driedger from Winnipeg, and Allan Anderson from the University of Saskatchewan (both sociologists) to help. They can joke about it now, but there was a lot of weight riding on their testimony as Edgar Epp put it, "We used the tactic for the hearing to get as many local people to speak as possible, but then called in people from different areas..." Jim Robbins interrupted him, laughing, "That was not a tactic, that was all spontaneous." His wife Nettie remembered "spontaneously" ringing Winnipeg several times, and Jake Buhler recalled, laughing, "I spontaneously called up Anderson and Leo [Driedger] about four times each."

Both Driedger and Allan spoke at length on the evolution of the contemporary Mennonite community in the Warman area, and provided an invaluable addition, both in their testimony and their references, to the information David Schroeder provided. The panelist's were thus provided not only with the evidence of the response of a large part of that community to the refinery proposal, but also a context in which to place the individual statements made to them.

While the "tacticians" in the WDCCG could not predict how the panel would respond to their social scientists, they were confident that in their area of expertise they were unassailable. They felt more vulnerable when it came to putting their own knowledge of local conditions forward as evidence, but there were some happy surprises in that area as well. Jim Robbins' critique of the Eldorado EIS description of the land in the proposed site was a case in point. Both Andy Roake, at public meetings, and the company's EIS, Robbins noted, had denigrated the agricultural potential of the land, referring to it as pasture. Robbins was able to show that the quality of the land was greater than the company's

study showed, and that their error was due to ignorance of the history of the land tenure patterns. Robbins' knowledge of local history revealed that much of the land was held in pasture because it was leased, and tenants do not, as a rule, break land for crops whatever its potential.<sup>1</sup> The WDCCG had considered the agricultural issue an important one ever since the success of the SEAP group in 1978 in the first set of Port Hope hearings. They were very surprised to discover that the agricultural expert brought in to reinforce the Eldorado case that the refinery emissions would not present a hazard to agriculture was not able to press his case for local conditions. Dr. Leonard H. Weinstein, Program Director for Environmental Biology at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research in Cornell University, did not know what effect a build-up in snow cover of fluoride emissions would have on the plants growing in spring meltwater, as his work had not taken the possible concentrating effects of prolonged snow cover into account. He pointed out that while fluorides tended to accumulate in leafy plants some of the effects could be avoided in plants such as lettuce by discarding the outer, older, leaves which would have had more time to build up fluoride deposits in the leaf tissue. However, he had no answer to Edgar Epp's query about how he might train his sheep "to be choosy about which leaves they're eating."<sup>2</sup>

If local farmers were able to show Dr. Weinstein to be a bit of a paper tiger when it came to their area there were a few other happy surprises for the amateur strategists as well. On the second night of the hearings, in Martensville, Andy Roake introduced the evening by defending at length the benefits that the refinery could represent for the Third World. His argument was not a new one, nor his alone, but the

familiar one of nuclear proponents, that "Saskatchewan's uranium can make a significant contribution to world stability by increasing the amount of energy available to the world community."<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Friesen and her husband had just completed three years of service in Asia, including two years in the Philippines, with the Mennonite Central Committee. She had accepted an invitation from the WDCCG to speak to the panel about one Third World energy project, the Bataan Peninsula nuclear power plant. Her appearance before the panel coincided with Mr. Roake's presentation on nuclear energy and the Third World, and the effect of confrontation was heightened by the fact that she spoke immediately following him. She revealed a gripping and pitiable story of a peasant population dispossessed of their land for a development put in place by the military regime of Ferdinand Marcos, the energy from which would service, not the people, but the foreign corporations occupying the nearby Bataan Export Processing Zone. The real experience of nuclear technology in the Third World, Ms. Friesen argued, was merely to enlarge the gap between rich and poor.<sup>4</sup>

The WDCCG had reached out to many other networks as well in its search for testimony against the proposal. It was an extended community that waited with the people of the Warman area, after the drama of the public meetings, to hear the response to their efforts.

The expected wait for a decision of three to four months eventually stretched to eight. It was August before the panel announced its recommendations. In the meantime the issue remained an active concern in the Warman area and elsewhere.

In March the CBC drama, "Harvest" appeared and drew a warm commendation from the WDCCG. Based on their experience with the early manoeuvres to buy land, and the battle for local allegiances, the

television production was a moving tale of a beleaguered and divided community. A "journalistic drama" is what one newspaper account called the CBC television production. Harvest was an instalment in the CBC series "For the Record", and as the writer, Denise Ball of the Leader-Post described it, "while some of the names have been altered, the script writer has gone out of his way to make sure viewers see the obvious connection between on-screen drama and the current political controversy over a uranium refinery proposed by Eldorado Nuclear at Warman near Saskatoon." The story concerned a Mennonite farmer who tries to keep a Crown corporation from taking over his land and using it as the site of a uranium refinery.<sup>5</sup>

In May a paperback book recording statements made at the hearings was released. Why People Say No was published jointly by the WDCCG, the SCNS and the Regina Group for a Non-Nuclear Society, and edited by Leonard Doellof of the WDCCG, and Bill Harding.

Anxiety about the outcome remained high, and in May Jake and Louise Buhler wrote privately to Wes Robbins, then a minister in the provincial government, asking in effect for any answer he could give them on the progress of the affair. He assured them that "In my view, and I am not alone in my view, the proposed uranium refinery should not be built in the Warman area." He also wrote, "While I may be in error, I am of the view that if we do get a Saskatchewan-based uranium refinery, it will not be built at Warman."<sup>6</sup>

Jake wrote to the federal minister of energy, Marc Lalonde in the same month, hoping to arrange a meeting or get some response to the group's continuing concern regarding the outcome of the hearings. Bill Janzen undertook to put on some added pressure from his Ottawa base, but

both efforts failed. The minister preferred to wait on the report, which was then expected in four to eight weeks. They got essentially the same response from the federal minister of the environment John Roberts.

The release of the panel statement on 6 August did not entirely clear the air. The panel withheld its approval pending further social impact studies, but otherwise approved the proposal. That left the ball in Eldorado's court. Would the company commission a further study, this time concentrating on the overlooked social elements, and submit to a second set of hearings on the same site, would they start the process again on another site in Saskatchewan where local opposition might be deemed less strong, or would they withdraw altogether? These were the options the panel's decision left them, and neither the company nor the federal ministers were in any hurry to announce their intentions.

The appeal to Robbins was based on more than the family connection (Wes Robbins' son Jim was married to Nettie Wiebe, Jake Buhler's wife's sister). In February a CBC television news program had alleged that Robbins had been considering appearing before the panel to oppose the building of the refinery at Warman, and had been denied permission to do so by the cabinet. Roy Romanow, attorney-general for the province, denied that there had been any question of "permission". Mr. Robbins had discussed the matter with his colleagues, and a majority had been opposed because the position "might be misinterpreted".

In the opinion of Peter von Stackelberg of the Regina Leader-Post the comments about fear of misinterpretation seemed "a bit overdone. A simple declaration by Robbins that he opposed only the Warman site, and not the development of a plant in some other location, would have settled the matter."<sup>7</sup>



The provincial government's ambivalent position had simply added fuel to the rumors that the report of the panel would deny permission to the proponent. According to Stackelberg it was "laboring under the burden of trying to maintain the appearance of neutrality, while being actively involved in the development of uranium so jobs, profits and royalties will add money to the provincial coffers."<sup>8</sup> At least one powerful minister, Environment head Ted Bowerman, while favouring the refinery development, apparently had another site under consideration near his own riding, between Shellbrook and Prince Albert, well north of Saskatoon. It was also becoming clear that the cabinet in general found the Warman site too controversial, and would attempt to change Eldorado's mind if the site were approved. One newspaper columnist, John Twigg, claimed to have information that the provincial government would exercise its option to hold its own hearings if the FEARO panel come down with a favourable decision.<sup>9</sup>

The controversy over whether the cabinet had prevented Robbins from speaking or not precipitated an admission from the premier (who had not been at the meeting) that the province had asked Eldorado to consider other possible sites more than once. "There were a number of discussions with Eldorado about other sites." The provincial government was only waiting for the decision of the panel before making their own announcement about the suitability of the site, Blakeney revealed.

Eldorado's response to this was to announce that any change in site would take away the economic advantage the Warman site enjoyed, and force them to consider building on one of the Ontario sites already approved, or expanding the Port Hope township refinery. Fourteen sites had been considered in Saskatchewan. Three of them, Vanscoy, Moose Jaw and North

Battleford had been looked at seriously before the Warman site had been selected by the company as the best choice.<sup>10</sup>

The WDCCG could not tell whether these conflicting announcements were occasion for hope or despair. The announcement of the panel recommendations, released in Ottawa on August 6, did not resolve the tension, although they vindicated the WDCCG. Although the panel considered the refinery acceptable on technical and environmental grounds, they felt that the potential impacts on the community were too important to be ignored.<sup>11</sup> The implication of this wording was that the social impacts had been ignored, and the panel report made it very clear what had to be covered. Information which they considered essential to a review of social impacts included: the extent to which the presence of a nuclear refinery might erode the residents' religious beliefs; an examination of the concept of stewardship and its relation to the problem of radioactive waste disposal; the effect on the community of the intrusion of outsiders, the effect refinery might have on changes in family and kinship structures; and how the refinery might intrude on an agricultural way of life. The panel suggested three options that Eldorado might pursue. The company might bring their impact study up to scratch and resubmit it for a renewed public review. Or they might repeat the entire process for one or more alternative sites in Saskatchewan, or compare other Saskatchewan sites with the Warman one. Whichever option the company chose, they would have to repeat the process of study and public meetings all over again.<sup>12</sup>

Glen Beck's comment on the failure of the EIS was that "It was outrageous. When you're charged with doing a socio-economic impact and coming before a panel, and you bring in that kind of a report?" He recalls;

"Beak Consultants Ltd. put the socio-economic part of the impact study in the hands of a person with professional training in animal husbandry. In scientific terms they went around and looked at every little flower, every dandelion, and examined it. In social terms they just passed it off. It's part of the science overburden, I guess. Social science matters tend to be pushed to the back."

In Beck's view David Schroeder made "A very strong argument ... that it would lead to a breakup of the cohesiveness of this religious community, a community bound together by religious beliefs." Yet the impact statement didn't appear to be aware of any special social conditions existing in the area chosen.

The panel were also afraid that the project was incompatible with the MVA plans developed for the area, especially with the Cathedral Bluffs recreation proposals. However, the failure of the MVA to send a representative to the hearings left them unable to make a final assessment of that problem. There had been an all-round failure of governments and government agencies like the MVA to respond satisfactorily to the process of examining the proposal, and that failure too was recognized in the recommendations of the panel. Corman Park's planning process would need some help before it could cope with a huge development like a refinery. The AECB needed to fine-tune its control measures, and the jurisdictions of regulatory agencies need clarification. Government agencies should take the social impacts of major projects as seriously as the environmental impacts in their monitoring and assessment procedures, and they should take their relationship to the public a little more seriously too. Something had to be done to provide compensation for damages caused by

transportation accidents in Canada. And, most important, the federal government should address the "continuing and widespread concern among the Canadian public about the proliferation of nuclear weapons." The panel believed Canada should pursue "institutional safeguards" against proliferation.<sup>13</sup>

The panel report had some comments to make about procedures too, which reflected the stresses and conflicts of the three weeks of public meetings. The panel noted a need to "establish firm rules regarding the roster for presentations to avoid the situation where they become rebuttals of previous speakers." Technical witnesses, and witnesses called by the panel needed to be dealt with differently from other witnesses in terms of time and method of choice. Some of the problems arising out of mixing in technical examination of issues and statements from the general public were avoided by the Cluff Lake Inquiry's two-stage hearing process, and the Warman panel wondered if a similar procedure might be adopted for future FEARO panels. The whole question of public participation both during and before the hearings, i.e., during the establishment of EIS guidelines was a problem for the panel, which recommended clarification of these procedures. How much public participation was wanted, and what kind? Did FEARO want "representative" public opinion, or was a panel meeting an open invitation for all comers?<sup>14</sup> The Warman panel had started out making a general invitation but when the consequences of a general acceptance of the invitation became apparent, the chairman attempted to have the WDCCG in particular make a "representative" submission rather than continue to encourage individual members to make their own statements. The attempt failed, but not before it added to the anxieties of the public about the procedures.

The whole question of public participation was one which had dogged the Eldorado proposal from the beginning. The panel's job would have been far easier had some attempt been made, earlier on in the process, to identify issues through public participation in the creation of guidelines for the EIS. The public and the panel were too often working at cross-purposes, as the local press noted in summing up the process. "Klenavic has been trying to keep repetition and non-specific issues out of the meetings," a newspaper report on the last session of the hearings observed, "but people have been refusing to edit out these global and moral issues."

However, people presenting briefs feel the global issues of nuclear proliferation, export of uranium from Saskatchewan for possible use in nuclear bombs, permanent waste disposal, uranium mining in the province and fears about radioactive effects are vitally linked to the refinery issue."

This fundamental disagreement on the purpose and scope of the public meetings has been causing frustration and friction with little hope of improvement.<sup>15</sup>

In retrospect the judicial calm of the formal hearings conducted by the Cluff Lake Inquiry seemed more conducive to examination of an issue, Herman Boerma thought. On the last day of the hearings he had appeared again on behalf of the SES and made a "quick review" of the problems with the inquiry process. He noted "lack of public involvement from the beginning of the planning process, lack of funding for interveners, lack of a clear definition of the question to be addressed, shifting of the burden of proof from the proponent to the public, procedures inadequate to establish proof, and insufficient time."<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most startling recommendation, indicative of the kind of strain imposed by the hearings, was the recommendation that "Some thought should be given to rules of order at public meetings. It is to be hoped that occasions involving slander and libel can be avoided by the exercise of temperance on the part of all participants."<sup>17</sup> Jake Buhler's anxieties, roused by the Corman Park Council meeting on the MVA, were all too well founded.

Gratifying as the panel recognition of their concerns was, the report didn't resolve the situation. Eldorado did not respond immediately, which left the way open to a new crop of rumors. It was not until October that the company announced its intention to withdraw altogether from plans to build in Saskatchewan. In the meantime, Jake remembers, "We were putting out brush fires all over". The WDCCG were veterans of the opposition now, and citizens groups called on them for support, as they had once reached out, as new proposals sprang up around the province.

The mayor of Regina, Larry Schneider, announced in August that he "would welcome the \$100 million project to Regina because of the benefits it would bring to the city." However, the councillors in Regina, when the mayor's proposal was put to them some time after he had gone public with his suggestion, turned him down unanimously. Headlines in the Leader Post announced in the same month that Eldorado was "not considering Moose Jaw", although it had been on its original list.<sup>18</sup>

In the same month it was revealed that in the first quarter of 1980 Eldorado had lost money, and that they were having to cut back on their plans for expansion at Port Hope. They had been advised by the new

Liberal energy minister, Marc Lalonde, to build a new refinery at the Blind River site, in liberal minister of mining Judy Erola's riding, rather than in Port Hope where a Conservative member still held the seat. The company had planned to expand the Port Hope operation to maintain the work force there, and gradually phase out the old refinery. Within a week of this news it became apparent that the company was not renewing the options at Warman, and local pro-refinery feeling exploded into action.

In Saskatoon the city council voted 6 to 5 to press the company to build locally, and a group of businessmen started a petition, which eventually contained 15,000 signatures, to present to the company urging them to go ahead with the Warman site. Louise Buhler remembered having the petition offered to her for signature while buying new school shoes for the family. It was an example of how invasive of everyday life the refinery issue was. She was outraged by finding that even her family shoe store was pushing the project, and moved to do something she would ordinarily never do, stage a personal confrontation. She had refused to sign and had left with her purchase when her anger caught up with her. "I was about half way down the block and had both hands full, kids in tow, and I thought, this is ridiculous. How could I just say no and walk out? I walked right back in there. I put all the pairs of shoes on the counter and I said, "Please refund me all my money. You can see my records, I've bought lots of shoes here, and so have my family, and we will stop buying shoes here, forever, because I am so incensed."

The incident might well have ended right there, with the purchase cancelled and Louise's protest made, but she and the store owner sat down to talk it out. She found that although he had a vague idea where Warman

was, he knew nothing about the community and was surprised to find Louise was a member of it. He crumpled the copy of the petition and said that they would withdraw it. A friend of the Buhlers' reported later that the store had indeed removed the petition permanently and had not just temporarily stopped soliciting signatures to placate Louise.

At the beginning of September the Prince Albert District Citizens Development Committee formed to study the effects of Eldorado locating in their area. The mayor of Prince Albert had declared he hoped Prince Albert residents would make a representation to Eldorado if they wanted the refinery to locate near that city. The "development" committee declared itself ready to hear any concerns the citizens might have about such a proposal, and asked the WDCCG's advice on organizing.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of September the company finally announced that it would not proceed with further study at the Warman site. They gave as their immediate reason that they could not negotiate "reasonable extensions" on the land options which they held on the site. However, the company did not rule out other sites in Saskatchewan at this time. Ron Dakers, Eldorado's vice-president of mining, said that the company was still interested in building a refinery in Saskatchewan to process uranium mined in the province, but probably at a new site. "I don't think it rules out Warman and the Saskatoon area, but it obviously makes it less likely," he said.<sup>20</sup>

The company statement was encouragement for a final flurry of land speculation in the district in the Langham area. A Saskatoon merchant, Henry Driedger, formed a company managed by a man calling himself



Bob Courvoisier to take out options on seven quarters of land in the area to offer to Eldorado. Although it was Driedger's company, it was "Courvoisier's" scheme, one of the many engendered locally by hopes of a quick profit. Driedger was victimized by Courvoisier, whose real name was Maltby, and who was later imprisoned for fraud against, among others, Driedger's company. The Langham Town Council held a debate on the issue, in which the newly formed Langham and Valley Concerned Citizens Organization also participated.<sup>21</sup>

For a time it seemed as though the issue would have to be fought all over again.

*Oster School. 350 people attended Faspa*

But by October the WDCCG felt confident enough to celebrate, and invited friends and supporters to the ~~farm~~ where so much of the planning had been done, to view an undeveloped riverbank and enjoy an old-fashioned faspa.

*No Faspa was in Oster school gym.*

What would have happened had the refinery been approved?

Certainly the WDCCG would have carried on the fight. Jake and Louise Buhler would have delayed their departure for Thailand and the Mennonite Central Committee relief work there to carry on. It is more difficult to say what form further resistance might have taken. Leo Driedger warned the panel early in the hearings that a form of non-violent guerrilla resistance might have been undertaken by some, blockading roads with farm machinery.

Judy Gayton, who had opposed the refinery proposal from the beginning and was an active member of SCAND, declared that she would put her body in form of construction machinery if necessary. Joe Froese and Gary Boldt thought some of the younger people might be moved to active resistance, the "guerrilla" tactic Driedger had suggested, but others deprecated the suggestion as

inappropriate and unacceptable to most local people. Sam Rempel had already resolved to remove himself and his family if it seemed inevitable that a refinery would be built in the district. Reverend Reddekopp thought it was too early to tell whether others would do so as well. Andy Roake interpreted his response as doubting, but it was more likely a literal statement. It is after all the kind of decision most people make when and not before it seems necessary.

What were the repercussions of the decision not to build? Some have already been discussed. The community remained divided, and was still divided four years later when preparations began to write this account. In spite of all the warning signs, the size and determination of the opposition came as a surprise to many, and so did the panel decision. The momentum of development in the uranium industry seemed unstoppable until it was stopped.

The experience left some of those involved with a sense of unfinished business. Joe Froese thought, "...the truth of it is that now a lot of the things that people were saying to Eldorado now are staring our generation and us in the face." He is concerned about the heavy use of chemicals in farming, and wonders if the dedication to "progress" that modern farming methods represent is really any different from Eldorado's use of "progress" as an argument in their favour. It raises questions for the individual as well, he believes. "As individuals we have to apply this to our lives personally ... who am I exploiting in my business as a trucker? Soon you find that there's a challenge right straight through, and I still think the issue isn't necessarily over."

He is also concerned about the Indians, some of whom are now protesting the pollution of northern Saskatchewan lakes by uranium mining. Senator John Tootoosis of the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations made an impressive appearance at the hearings to speak against the refinery proposal, and Froese reflects, "The Indians stood with the Mennonites. But when are the Mennonites going to realize that we have to stand with the Indians?"

Gary Boldt commented that "In some ways the whole process brought up more questions than answers. If we're worried about pollution from the refinery, on air, land, and in the river, then what about our farming, what about farm chemicals. If we have a beef against this kind of industry and the technology, then what about some of the other ways that we're making our living, some of the other technologies that we're taking on? How is it affecting us? So we have those kinds of questions too. At least, I do."

At the hearings Gary had described the process that the community had come through in grappling with the refinery issue as similar to that of a community that has experienced a catastrophe. They had sustained some damage, but the "feelings of community were stronger, and they were better able to express "what shape we would like our community to take." It was an "awareness creator", he thought, because "throughout the whole thing we realized we were close to our agricultural roots, and also our history. We thought a lot about that, especially the pacifist of peace aspect of our history, and what that meant with this refinery issue. And whether we wanted to be a prosperous industrial community, or whether we were satisfied with things going on as they were."

Ruth Buhler describes it as "an education process that I felt couldn't stop when the refinery issue was over." She remembers that "the focus of spiritual togetherness was incredibly important." She joined the Inter-Church Uranium Committee (ICUC) and reports that some of her colleagues there have commented that other [anti-refinery] committees never developed the same cohesiveness, the same feeling for people and for each other, the same strength that they perceived the WDCCG to have. "People that looked in from the outside recognized that there was a great deal of strength from its having a spiritual focus. I think it probably shocked all the panel and the other people, what an impact it even had on them."

The impact was enough to stop the project.

September 1980  
Eldorado announced  
they would not  
pursue the Warman site.  
The end.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Robbins' critique of the EIS position appears in International Reporting Inc., EEAP, XVII, 2394-2404.
2. The issue regarding winter build-up came out in questioning from the floor from Mr. Thiessen (Ibid., XVIII, 2510-14); the comments on sheep from Mr. Epp appear on p.2517.
3. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, IV, 440.
4. Ibid., IV, 442-59.
5. (Regina) Leader-Post, 7 March 1980, "CBC's latest journalistic drama puts focus on uranium debate" by Denise Ball.
6. Jake and Louise Buhler to Mr. Wes Robbins, 26 May 1980; Wes A. Robbins, Minister of Consumer Affairs and Revenue, Supply and Services, to Mr. and Mrs. Jake Buhler, 4 June 1980.
7. L-P, 5 February 1980, "Uranium issue still plaguing government."
8. L-P, 5 February 1980, loc. cit.
9. L-P, 29 April 1980, "John Twigg".
10. L-P, 8 February 1980, "Warman the only site for uranium refinery."
11. Environment Canada Release, 6 August 1980 (Ottawa), p.2.
12. Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office, Eldorado Uranium Refinery, RM of Corman Park, Saskatchewan: Report of the Assessment Panel, FEARO, Ottawa, 1980, pp.52-3.
13. Ibid., p.56.
14. Ibid., pp.63-4.
15. L-P, 19 January 1980, "Temper run high over uranium refinery."
16. International Reporting Inc., EEAP, XXI, 3017.

17. Federal Environment Assessment Review Office, Eldorado Uranium Refinery, p.63.
18. Regina Leader-Post, 8 August 1980, "Schneider wants refinery for city"; L-P, 21 August 1980, "Eldorado not considering Moose Jaw."
19. L-P, 4 September 1980, "Uranium Development Study"; L-P, 15 August 1980, "Prince Albert Interested in Uranium Refinery."
20. L-P, 30 September 1980, "Warman Refinery killed by Eldorado Nuclear."
21. L-P, 19 November 1980, "Speaker slams pacifist views against uranium refinery"; L-P, 21 October 1980, "Options Buyers hope to Attract Refinery."

